

25/10

An Introduction to The Philosophy of Education

Professor R. RAMANUJACHARI



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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SRI VENKATESWARA UNIVERSITY
TIRUPATI

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FOREWORD

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The Syndicate of Sri Venkateswara University did well in instituting the scheme of visiting Professorship in some of the Departments of this University. The Post-graduate Department of Education took advantage of this and invited Prof. R. Ramanujachari, formerly Dean, Faculty of Education and Philosophy, Annamalai University, to deliver a series of lectures in 1971-72 at the University on 'The Philosophical Foundations of Education'. Prof. R. Ramanujachari and Prof. R. Srinivasa Rao, Head of the Department of Education, S.V. University, are to be congratulated on bringing out the series of lectures in print thus extending the wisdom contained in these lectures to a wider circle of persons interested in this subject.

In this monograph are clearly recorded the objects and aims of education. The author, with decades of experience and broad vision, has rightly characterised the aim of education as the attainment of pleasure and if this pleasure is to be for life-time the child should be trained to take a long range view and it is the duty of the teacher to foster traits in the child to choose the better sort of pleasures, powers of judgement and self-control. He had also emphasised the fact that education is to equip man for the struggle for existence, help him to adjust himself to the environment, to preserve and transmit cultural heritage. All this the child has to acquire through minimum of guidance, and never be subjected to severe restrictions and controls, and all this in the expectation of happiness in an uncertain future. He should also be made to know what to learn, how and when to learn. Prof. R. Ramanujachari rightly compares the learning process by the child to a play and that all learning is to take place in the spirit and method of play. Educators believe today that play is nature's way of education and it is marked by spontaneity and creativity. Life is experimental and hence the teacher needs to bear in mind that all learning process and educational exercises should be viewed as a continuing experiment.

The need to develop and promote in the child group activity is stressed so that when he grows up to be a citizen he will be able to take his due share and responsibility in the governance of a democracy.

In this the child becomes the centre of the picture. The child gets educated through experience of things rather than by verbal studies. He should acquire knowledge and information to face new situations and should find solutions for the problems that may confront him. The author cites instances of how Manu had stressed the importance of this concept of education.

Prof. Ramanujachari has succinctly described the educational philosophy and practices in the country from ancient to modern times. He covers a wide field from the times of Upanishads to the Moghal Emperors and the British Rule in India. He, having been inspired by the advocacy of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Sarada Devi, Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi, has emphasised the need for meditation, prayer and religious education, the importance of Basic Education (Wardha Scheme) i.e., learning through activity recognising dignity of labour all these. A show the depth of knowledge the author possesses in the field of education. Craft at the centre of educational programme is to be encouraged as the theme of Wardha Scheme is emphasised adequately by the author. The need for the use of the mother tongue in the learning process as well as for expression stressed by Mahatma Gandhi finds adequate emphasis.

Various current theories of knowledge and that knowledgeable person need not be a cultured person and how to obtain and preserve knowledge are well documented. The author rightly observes how an ideal teacher is playing the part of a gardener who often prepares the soil and enriches it with fertiliser and nurtures with other nutriment to stimulate the plant to self-growth and expansion. In a similar manner the teacher is an adviser and guide in drawing out the talents of the child to promote self-growth and development. The information contained in this monograph will serve as a good introduction for the teacher-educator as well as pupil teachers.



function of education in human life, individual and social, and will help in solving at least some of the problems that confront education at the present day and in getting our bearings in our efforts at educational reconstruction.

In fine, I wish to express my sincere thanks to Dr. K. Satchidanandamurthy, the Vice-Chancellor and to Dr. R. Srinivasa Rao, Professor of Education for giving me yet another occasion to serve the cause of education. I hope this book will meet with a good reception at the hands of those for whom it is intended and fulfil my intention to stimulate their interest to study the philosophy of education in greater depth

Madras,

November 25, 1976.

R. RAMANUJACHARI

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

It was a rare privilege to have been invited to deliver a course of lectures on the Philosophy of Education to the students of the Post-graduate Department of Education at the Sri Venkateswara University, in the academic year 1971-72. And it is certainly very flattering to find that the gist of these lectures is being published in the form of a brochure so that it may serve the needs of students in the years to come. The central aim of my lectures was to present the kernel of the various schools of educational philosophy so as to stimulate the interest of the students in the writings of the great masters of educational thought; and how far I could realize my aim is to be judged by those that peruse this booklet.

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to my young friend and former colleague, Dr. R. Srinivasa Rao, Head of the Department of Education, and Dr. D. Jaganatha Reddy, the dynamic Vice-Chancellor of the Sri Venkateswara University, for inviting me to serve as a visiting Professor and also for arranging to publish the substance of my talks.

Madras

September 7, 1973

R. RAMANUJACHARI

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PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Philosophy is search for Truth, a persistent attempt to view reality as a whole and not in fragments, 'to see life steadily, and see it whole', to grasp what *is*, as distinct from what merely *seems*, to get at the eternal and everlasting rather than the fleeting and the evanescent. The nature of the cosmos and man's place therein are the two central themes in this fascinating quest. If it is to be no mere pastime but an intensely sincere pursuit, philosophy must illumine the intellect, reform conduct and refine tastes. It is not only a view of life, but also a way of life. Philosophical views about life and its purposes are bound to influence one's way of life and also prompt efforts to modify the beliefs and conduct of those around us. Philosophy and education are thus indissolubly bound together. Philosophy, which is life-view and world-view, and education, which is a preparation for life, naturally go hand in hand; in fact, they are the two sides of an identical process. Philosophy constitutes the contemplative phase and education, the practical aspect.

Since our views of life vary, educational theories and methods would also vary correspondingly. It is no accident that great philosophers—Socrates, Plato, Rousseau, Bertrand Russell, Whitehead, Dewey, Tagore, Vivekananda, Gandhi and Aurobindo, to mention only a few names, have initiated different educational theories and techniques.

Though it may be that every mode of educational thought and practice is not the conscious working out of the implications of a particular type of philosophy, it cannot be denied that there is a great measure of correspondence bet-

ween certain systems of philosophy and certain patterns of educational thought and procedure. Though in fact most schemes of education are eclectic and derive their theoretical support from more philosophical systems than one and even though the line of demarcation between the philosophical types is indistinct, it is not difficult to notice that each of the broad philosophical tendencies has its appropriate educational bearings. Some of the leading philosophical schools with their educational implications may now be reviewed and the contributions of recent Indian thinkers to educational reconstruction considered.

NATURALISM

Naturalism is the philosophy that takes the world of nature to be the sole reality. Besides this world which comprises things and phenomena studied by the positive sciences, there is no 'Other World', no super-nature. Mind, consciousness, thought and the like are merely bodily processes. Apart from the physical body there is no soul, finite or infinite; and with the denial of the soul, the question of its surviving bodily death does not arise.

There are several varieties of Naturalism. When the ultimate constituents of the universe are said to be atoms or particles of matter, it is called *Materialism*; if, in the light of present-day science, they are taken as energy, it is known as *Energism*. Without specifying the nature of the ultimate constituents, if stress is laid on the fact of nature conforming to the rigid laws of science, it becomes *Mechanism*.

The laws that account for physical nature are said to apply to human behaviour as well. Mind is treated as a product of the body and is a machine, though an exceedingly complicated machine. It is claimed that the mind is essentially similar to the penny-in-the slot machine, though it is capable of an amazing variety of responses to the diverse stimuli that impinge on it. Through careful, systematic and continued observation it is considered possible to formulate laws linking different stimuli with their respective specific

responses. Thus is envisaged the possibility of predicting and controlling behaviour, as in the case of machines of human contrivance. Thought, it is said, need not cause any perplexity; it is just 'silent speech'. "The brain secretes thought, as the liver secretes bile". Behaviourist psychology is thus the hand-maiden of the mechanistic view.

Dismissing as highly artificial existing techniques and tools of education and the traditional school system itself, this philosophical view recommends the setting up of conditions under which natural development could take place. The impulses of the child are good as they afford pleasure. The aim of education should be the attainment of pleasure. Since a life-time of pleasure is to be preferred to pleasure of the moment, the child should be trained to take a long range view, and this would necessitate the fostering of traits such as capacity to choose the better sort of pleasures, powers of judgment and self-control. The natural propensities are to be trained to function in ways that would be conducive to individual and social well-being. If man is a machine subject to rigid physical laws, education should help to perfect it so that it could perform efficiently various tasks that might be set. Corresponding to the varying explanations of the actual process of evolution of man from simple beginnings, the aim of education is described variously as "equipping man for the struggle for existence", "helping the individual to adjust himself to the environment", 'preserving and transmitting cultural heritage with additions if possible' and the like.

'Child nature' is in itself good; therefore, education must be based thereon. Without expecting them to behave as responsible grown-ups, children must be allowed to develop freely with the minimum of guidance. They should not be subjected to severe restrictions and controls in the expectation of happiness in an uncertain future.

The child is his own judge as to *what* he is to learn, *when* and *how*. The teacher then has a precarious position; he is just tolerated. He allows the child to develop in the direction of his inclinations without external restrictions.

His task is confined to that of providing the ideal setting best suited for the full flowering of child-nature. He merely sets the stage and functions as an observer. He is no purveyor of information, and has no right to mould the character of the child in the light of his ideals. He helps the child to teach himself. Thus the child is at the centre of the picture.

Teaching procedures should be in accordance with the laws of child nature and development, stress being laid on the direct experience of things rather than on verbal studies. Social lessons are learnt best by being placed in situations that evoke qualities of 'give-and-take'. Since children learn best through play, all learning is to take place in the spirit, and by the method, of play. Play is nature's way of education. It is characterised by spontaneity and creativity.

This was responsible for initiating scientific studies of child nature. The teacher must be well acquainted with the nature of the child mind. On the negative side, he should not expect adult standards from children, and should not interfere with or restrain their activities; on the positive side, he is to start with children as they are though, they are not to be left to remain at that. Hammering the child into the pattern desired by the teacher is barbarous. He is not to be kneaded and pressurised into shape like inert plastic material. They must be helped to grow and develop. It is here that naturalism is found wanting, as it does not specify the goals to be achieved. Nor does it furnish a basis by which to assess values. In developing 'according to his nature', 'nature' may mean animal nature or distinctively human or spiritual nature. When a hierarchy of values is admitted, Naturalism gets close to Idealism.

IDEALISM

The central thesis acceptable to the several divergent forms of idealism is that the ultimately real is more akin to mind, consciousness, thought or spirit than to matter. Of the two orders of reality with which we are concerned, the inner world of experience and the outer physical world, the latter

nous games developed not merely their muscles and nerves but also promoted emotional discipline and maturity. The aesthetic aspect was not neglected either; appreciation of beauty in nature, in all manifestations of divine creation, in varied arts like music, dancing, drawing and painting was cultivated by means of direct experience and the very sites chosen for imparting instruction were ideally suited for this purpose.

It is also interesting to note that social virtues like tolerance, co-operation and fellow-feeling were also fostered as the fundamental principle of the omni-presence of the Universal Spirit in all beings was commonly accepted by all as an undeniable fact. This was not confined merely to relations among human beings but extended even to lower animals and sometimes even to inanimate objects.

Thus the entire philosophy of education in ancient India rested on the solid foundation of a ready acceptance of the philosophy and purpose of life expounded in the great scriptures and interpreted by the great seers, who served as preceptors to the high and the low.

The basic principles of this ancient philosophy of education continued down to the nineteenth century with, of course, some slight modifications particularly during the Muslim period. Akbar, the great Moghul Emperor who strove hard to build up amity and understanding between the two great communities - the Hindus and the Muslims - tried to make educational institutions more acceptable to all by incorporating in them more of secular than of theological studies. But his experiment did not have any profound effect on the system of education in the country as a whole.

But with the advent of the British rule, there was a major change which was first initiated by Lord Macaulay who felt that Indians should imbibe Western ideas, culture, and language and develop a scientific outlook so that they too might achieve the material progress that the west enjoyed through industrial and technological revolution. Educational

institutions on the pattern of British schools and colleges were set up; English became the medium of instruction except perhaps at the primary stage; the regional and the classical languages of the country were neglected and the religious bias that was a characteristic feature of the old system of education was completely done away with. A study of western institutions, their history, organization and the like were the main features that replaced the old curriculum and great interest was evinced in the study of science and technology. This change might have been instrumental in fostering some healthy attitudes in the fields of good government, economic advancement and scientific progress; but it was certainly not an un-mixed blessing. The exotic nature of the new system made it impossible for the majority to derive any great benefit from it except perhaps to attain some measure of proficiency in the foreign language which qualified them for humble posts in the hierarchy of the foreign administration.

The unfamiliar medium of instruction put a premium on mechanical memorisation without a proper and intelligent understanding. Critical and creative thinking and original effort were completely stifled and a dead mediocrity was the major outcome of the new system. Worse still, traditional beliefs were shaken, respect for antiquity was lost and, even faith in ancient scriptures and moral standards was badly affected.

But during the nineteenth and the present centuries, several great reformers and educationists tried to stem the rot and revive ancient values and principles. The views and contributions of some of them to educational thought and philosophy deserve special mention.

RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The great seer and saint, Sri Ramakrishna, condemned mere book-learning as it would lead only to the stuffing of the mind with thoughts of others and he advocated the practice of the virtues mentioned in the scriptures – the qualities of

humility, tolerance, purity or continence, contentment and patient suffering. He also stressed the need for meditation, whatever might be the nature of one's work in life.

Sri Sarada Devi, the consort of the saint, was in favour of the spread of education among girls. She too stressed the efficacy of meditation and prayer. The habit of meditation and prayer which it encourages is one which all should seek to develop; for it recreates the spirit, refreshes it and reinvigorates it, as nothing else can. Just as exercise strengthens the body and study strengthens the intellect, so meditation and prayer strengthen the spirit in its battle against evil. It helps to liberate the soul from the gross clutches of the body and to send it into the world to realise the values still unrealised. The soul is like an undying flame that will at least consume the body's grossness. Every act of prayer is a step in the removal of this grossness. The prayer in our gurukulas is well-known. It says "May He (the Supreme) protect us both (the teacher and the taught); may He grant us sustenance. May he give us strength. May our study be with understanding. May there be no dissensions between us." Just five pithy sentences embodying the most modern educational philosophy.

*Om saha nāvavatu | saha nau bhunaktu |
saha vīryam karavāmahai | tejasvināvadhītastu |
mā vidvishāmahai ||*

According to Vivekananda, every one has a spark of the Divine in Him and hence education consists in the manifestation of the perfection which exists already in us. All knowledge, sacred or secular, is in the mind, which is, indeed, a mine of infinite wisdom. No knowledge worth the name comes from outside. Knowledge dwells in the mind like fire in flint; and suggestion is the friction that releases it. Learning is merely removing the veil that obscures. Knowledge advances by the process of uncovering what exists.

Education is a process of inner growth and development of the powers inherent in the individual. The child

educates himself. In fact, no one can teach another, as Madame Montessori had emphasised. We cannot teach the pupil what he does not know, any more than we can make a plant grow. The plant develops its own nature. Just as the seed develops along the lines of its own inherent nature, the child grows and develops according to its own inner potencies. The teacher can only help it to grow to its full stature by removing the obstacles in its way, and providing conditions favourable for growth, even as the wise gardener can facilitate the growth of a plant by preparing the soil, removing the weed, supplying needed nourishment and putting up a hedge lest the plant should be destroyed. There his work stops. The teacher should not give negative suggestions but use only positive ones. He should not inhibit but encourage natural inclinations; he should provide full freedom for growth and not clutter up the mind with a mass of useless information.

Since all are children of God, the teacher of children is engaged in the supreme act of worship by taking note of individual differences and encouraging each to move forward in the line best suited to him.

Vivekananda pleads for an all-round development of the individual. He lays great stress on physical development. Physical weakness is the enemy of true progress.

As regards the methods of education, he laid great emphasis on concentration of mind without which a great part of thought-force is merely wasted. "The Greeks applied their concentration to the external world and the result was perfection in art, literature, etc. The Hindu concentrated on the internal world, upon the unseen realms in the self, and developed the science of Yoga." He added that 'Brahmacharya' or complete continence with absolute chastity in thought, word and deed is an essential pre-requisite for such concentration. He was also of the opinion that 'Shraddha' or genuine faith in one-self is essential if one is to achieve anything. "We are children of the ALMIGHTY; we are sparks of the infinite, divine fire. This faith in themselves was in the heart of our ancestors; this faith in themselves was the

motive power that pushed them forward in the march of civilization. If there has been degeneration, if there have been defects, you will find that degeneration started on the day our people lost faith in themselves. In his characteristic way, he says "You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. You will understand the Upanishads and the Gita better if you are strong in body." He was never tired of pointing out that the self cannot be realized by one who was weak (*na ayam ātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ*). It is significant that the Upanishads define Brahman as *Abhaya* (fearlessness). 'Muscles of iron' and 'nerves of steel' and a 'giant will' are said to be needed to penetrate the mysteries of nature. Intellectual development is essential. Vivekananda makes a powerful plea for the cultivation of western science and technology along with our history, philosophy and other subjects for the economic uplift of our country. Intellectual advance does not mean accumulation of information. "If education were identical with information, the libraries would be the greatest sages in the world, and encyclopaedias the Rishis."

Vivekananda is keenly aware of the dangers of mere intellectual refinement which leaves the heart untouched. It only makes men extremely selfish. The mere sharpening of the intellect does not necessarily bring with it enlightenment. Illumination comes from the heart. "Through the heart the Lord speaks." The end of education, says Vivekananda, is *man-making*. Through the fashioning of character, the vicious circle of evil-doing is broken; and man sees God in everything, and recognizes that it is sinful to neglect the education of the masses. It is the duty of the educated to educate the poorer section of the population.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861-1941)

According to Rabindranath Tagore, Supreme Reality is the Aesthetic Absolute (*Rasa, Beauty, Sundaram*). A *Taittiriya* text declares, "He who knows that Brahman as bliss knows the truth; for truly beings here are born from

bliss, when born by bliss they live, and into bliss when departing they enter" (III. 6.1). This spirit manifests itself in all things that exist, in the world of beautiful nature and in the mysterious realm of human nature, but more fully in man than in material nature. In Tagore's expressive words, man is 'the golden string in God's lute'. Supremely perfect, God is accessible to man. *Paratva* (transcendence) and *Saulabya* (easy accessibility) are His twin distinguishing marks. The relation of man to God, the source of his being, is sought to be expressed with the aid of several analogies; the Lord is described as the lover, friend, master and the like. Perhaps love is the nearest analogue to this unique relationship. Tagore believes, with the Vaishnava mystics, that God needs man as much as man needs God. Alienation from God is bondage and sin. Realisation of one's true nature is '*moksha*'. "Moksha" consists in the enlargement of one's consciousness by growing with and growing into one's surroundings. There is nothing otherworldly in this conception. "If there be," says Tagore, "anything absolutely unrelated to humanity, then for us it is absolutely non-existing." God's love for man is only the obverse of man's love of God.

The aim of life is to know ourselves, our kinship with external nature and other souls and the source of our being. To serve this end, education should seek to develop the intellect. All aspects of life, economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual, come within the purview of education. Students should be taught how to produce goods essential for life, utilizing fully modern science and technology for the purpose. Educational institutions should take on this function also as an essential part of their programme and work in close collaboration with the villages round about. Thus while Gandhi is the high-priest of Basic Education, Tagore was the fore-runner of this scheme.

The Ashrama ideal greatly fascinated him, because the preceptor and his disciples lived together close to mother nature, producing what they wanted, and learning whatever interested them in an atmosphere of freedom and through

fearless inquiry and with great speculative daring. Nothing under the sun escaped their searching scrutiny. Tagore did not separate art from life. He pursued beauty as a manifestation of the spirit. He described himself as a 'belated Kalidasa' because people had allowed their artistic susceptibilities to languish on account of the anaemic system of intellectual training to which they had been subjected. He insisted that Art should find a place in higher education, but would not allow considerations of utility to enter into the picture. Interest in Art for its social utility amounts, he says, to using it purely as a means only; it is like interest in the forest for its timber but not for its foliage and fruits. It is self-defeating, because without foliage and flowers timber may wither away.

Tagore is convinced that if education in India is to be creative, it should be inspired by the best in our cultural heritage with the values of western science added thereto. Foreign influences when assimilated with the lasting elements in our culture would make for greater vitality and vigorous growth. Blindly copying foreign modes would be disastrous; and looking for quick results without normal development would be vain.

Education should be through the medium of the mother tongue; else as Gandhi has maintained, it leads to 'brainfag' and produces 'crammers and imitators'. We must welcome knowledge from every side. Borrowing science and technology from the west is justifiable; but to borrow the very language in which they are expressed is compared by Tagore to borrowing money as well as the purse to keep it.

Tagore makes fun of a Headmaster reported to be a disciplinarian who, visiting the poet's famous School at Bholpur, was surprised at one of the boys choosing a fork of the branches of a tree for settling down to his studies. The poet explained to him that childhood was the only period for preferring the branch to a drawing-room chair and that as a grown-up man he would not deprive the boy of that pleasure, simply because he himself could not enjoy it personally. The

poet was in turn surprised at the headmaster's approval of studying Botany through books only, which becomes Science and not nature's own method of instruction. He said he considered it a part of education for boys to realise that they are in a scheme of existence, "where trees are a substantial fact, not merely as generating chlorophyll and taking carbon from the air but as living trees—a great lesson for teachers and parents."

GANDHI ON EDUCATION

Gandhi believes that the entire world of matter, life and consciousness is rooted in a Supreme Spirit which he called Truth or God. Though it is beyond senses and thought, we may seek to get glimpses of the Divine in the wonderful panorama of the physical universe and the fascinating ascent of life and, above all, in the miracle of human existence. The goal of human endeavour consists in man knowing himself as an aspect of the Divine. The means to the goal are *Satyāgraha* and *Ahimsā*, the steadfast pursuit of Truth and the resolution to live by it. The aim of education is to help in the realisation of Truth.

Man is neither the gross animal body, nor mere intellect, nor the heart, nor the soul alone. Therefore, a comprehensive and harmonious scheme of education must provide for physical training, intellectual refinement, moral development and spiritual purity as its indispensable constituents. A sound and healthy body is the prerequisite for true education of the intellect. Intellectual brilliance is absolutely worthless without good character; and character training, in its turn, presupposes spiritual advance. The content of education should thus be very wide indeed. The specific contribution of Gandhi lies in his scheme of education where the physical, intellectual, moral and religious education of children is attempted through the medium of a handicraft.

This scheme, variously called Basic Education, Wardha Scheme, and Nai Talim, belongs to the class of programmes

such as 'Learning through Activity', Loveback system and the Project Method. By putting the craft at the centre of the educational programme, provision is made for intelligent manual labour and thereby for cultivating the child's mental, physical and spiritual faculties. The insistence on the production of usable and saleable articles is intended to emphasise the aspect of (1) learning a useful vocation, (2) recognising the dignity of labour, (3) checking the dis-integration of village life, and (4) reducing the gulf between the rich and the poor. Through spontaneous participation in some craft, the child's curiosity is aroused and that is made the basis for teaching several subjects. The medium of the village handicrafts is conceived by Gandhi as 'the spearhead of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences.' Thus Gandhi considered educational reconstruction as an instrument of social revolution.

A person educated in this fashion can never lapse into illiteracy. Since the school was organised as a community, the child got an opportunity to learn the lessons of co-operative living. The motive of service replaces that of competition and prevents stratification of society. The child accepts himself as a purposive, responsible person, and this sense of vocation acts as an integrating force in society. It provides outlets for emotional and other values as well. Arts and crafts are not pleasant interludes between spells of serious work, but essentials of the school curriculum; else craft work would degenerate into slipshod activity. After all, bad work is bad education. The principle of utility in all art and crafts is always kept in mind. This is perhaps an obstacle to high grade art creation.

Production of usable and saleable articles entails hard work which is bound to discipline the mind, and cultivate resourcefulness, concentration, economy and lead to joy of creative work. From the primary to the university stage the same principle is to be followed. The ideal is the production of men of culture who also possess knowledge and skill in some special direction.

Among the handicrafts, spinning seems to have exercised a magic influence on Gandhi. He is so fascinated by it that he sees in it infinite potentialities for good; he grows almost poetical in describing its virtues. Sacrificial spinning in a scientific manner is for him the symbol of a moral revolution.

Like most modern educationists, Gandhi believes that pupils have the largest share of responsibilities for learning on their shoulders. Teachers cannot give what the pupils have not; they can only help to draw out what the pupils have in themselves. The pupils must learn to think and act for themselves, though remaining thoroughly disciplined and humble seekers.

An education which does not provide for religious instruction is worthless. By religious instruction is not meant teaching any religion in particular, but reverential study of all religions and the cultivation of the true religious spirit through the steadfast practice of *Satyagraha* and *Ahimsa*. It makes for purity of heart and purity of living. True religious spirit involves prayer and worship and includes much else. Among other things, it helps to create manliness which is neither bravado nor cowardice, but daring to do the right, whatever the consequence. To neglect religious education for fear of offending some one's religion is "like allowing the field to lie fallow and grow weeds for want of the tiller's knowledge of the proper use of the field."

Though Gandhi was not opposed to Western culture, he strongly protested against the use of English as the medium of instruction, as it struck at the root of originality, encouraged cramming and made the English educated youth foreigners in their own land. Gandhi said "I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible, but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

AUROBINDO (1872-1950)

Man, according to Aurobindo, is spirit with a complex nature, comprising physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiri-

tual aspects. Though the spirit manifests itself through these activities, and grows with their growth, it is not any one of these singly or collectively. At the summit of its ascent, it rises to its full stature and achieves total perfection, Divine Life. A comprehensive education that is to enable the individual to reach the fulness of being must necessarily have five aspects corresponding to the five major fields of activity. These phases of education succeed one another, but none supplants the preceding; all are complementary.

Physical :

Since total perfection of being is what is sought, the physical part cannot be set aside. The body is the material basis, the instrument to be used for the fulfilment of every ideal (dharma) we propose for ourselves. Through concentrated effort and appropriate training, the body may be made a fit instrument for a perfect life. A sound system of physical education is expected to bring about a healthy body, physical skills, dexterity and endurance, sensory acuity, control of impulses, and virtues like fair-play, co-operation and grace, beauty and harmony, and it is also said to have a beneficial influence on the mental and vital aspects of our being.

Vital :

Vital education concerns the vast territory of our instincts, dispositions, emotions and the like. The organisation and training of the complex forces with a view to the building up of character is of tremendous importance. Character is sought to be built by affording encouragement to 'the tiny flame of inspiration' towards perfection that exists in every human being. Here, as elsewhere, growth comes from within. The educator only provides the conditions necessary for its manifestation from within and sees to it that the flame is not blown out. Where the training is sought to be enforced, the consequences are disastrous; mere outward conformity and hypocrisy are the outcome. "The first rule of moral training is to suggest and invite, not command and impose." The educator has only "to put the child into the right road to his own perfection and encourage him to follow it, watch-

ing, suggesting, helping, not interfering.” The most effective method of suggestion is personal example, contact with great thoughts, noble emotions and inspiring ideals embodied in history and biography. They constitute *satsanga*: the good company, which has greater effect than moral preaching. When the dynamic, vital part of our being is thus influenced to act from within by the realisation of a higher law, it becomes an ally of true spiritual progress.

The education of the aesthetic side of our being also pertains to the vital part. It involves the training of the senses and their functioning, cultivation of discrimination and the aesthetic sense, and refinement of aesthetic taste. Systematic and enlightened culture of the senses and aesthetic tastes would enable the child to free itself from the base, the vulgar and the perverse and to discover and love the beautiful, lofty, healthy and noble things in nature and in human behaviour. A person of true aesthetic refinement would have acquired a certain nobility and generosity which would find expression in his behaviour. The highest aim of art is to find the Divine through beauty.

The system of education which instead of keeping artistic training apart as a privilege for a few specialists, frankly introduces it as a part of culture no less necessary than literature or science, will have taken a great step forward in the perfection of national education and the general diffusion of a broad based human culture. It is necessary that every man should have his artistic faculty developed, his taste trained and his sense of beauty and insight into form and colour.....made habitually active, correct and sensitive.... should be habituated to expect the beautiful in preference to the ugly, the noble in preference to the vulgar, the fine in preference to the crude, the harmonious in preference to the gaudy. A nation surrounded daily by the beautiful, noble, fine and harmonious becomes that which it is habituated to contemplate and realises the fullness of the expanding spirit in itself.” (Sri Aurobindo: *The National Value of Art*, 1953 pp 56-58.)

Mental:

Mental education is commonly mistaken for accumulation of knowledge. One may be a veritable store-house of knowledge and yet lack culture. Mental education has a two-fold aspect, one individual and the other social. The individual aspect is culture. Culture does not depend on the amount of knowledge one has, but on the way it has been organized, assimilated, integrated and transformed and made a basis for higher vision and understanding. The collective aspect of education refers to the training of the individual for some vocation. "The chief aim of education," says Aurobindo, "should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is the best and make it perfect for a noble use."

The Psychic and Spiritual Education :

The education referred to so far concerns the commonly known human faculties. There are, however, other dimensions of human personality of greater significance, namely, the higher being and 'the central being' or soul or *jivatman*. The higher consciousness or what Aurobindo calls the supramental enables man to rise far above the mental and its slavery to ignorance. The 'Central Being' is the soul. The discovery of the soul, the real man within, is the ultimate goal of human life. Education can help in the process, but the discovery is ultimately the effort of the individual soul. Unlike other aspects of education which progress from below upward, this supramental education works from above downward, transmuting and transfiguring every aspect of our being including the physical. The individual finds that he is liberated from slavery to the flesh and personal attachment.

"....., the supramental education will result not merely in a progressively developing formation of the human nature, an increasing growth of its latent faculties, but in a transformation of nature itself, a transformation of the being in its entirety, a new ascent of the species above and beyond man towards Superman, leading in the end to the appearance of the divine race upon earth."

I

THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

INTRODUCTORY

Theory of knowledge, called in technical parlance, Epistemology, from the Greek word *episteme* meaning knowledge, is an important branch of Philosophy. Since some other disciplines like psychology and logic also deal with knowledge, it is necessary to be clear about the scope and standpoint of Epistemology. Psychology is concerned with every phase of behaviour, not merely thinking; and in its study of the thinking process it seeks to describe the way in which men *actually think*; and it does not go into the question of the truth-value of the products of thinking. Logic, as a normative science, is interested in setting forth the way in which men *ought to think* in order to avoid fallacious and devious modes of thought and to be on guard and not to be misled if others indulge in crooked thinking. It is, however, concerned primarily with formal validity, consistency of thought with thought, and not harmony of thought with fact or reality. How do judgments hang together? Do given premises warrant the conclusion drawn therefrom? Is the inference deduced supported by the evidence advanced? - these are some of the major questions raised in logic. The question of the truth of the premises or of the conclusion is never considered in formal logic. But man is seldom satisfied with judgments that are only formally consistent; he seeks judgments which are true. Therefore, the logical inquiry is incomplete and it finds its completion in Epistemology which is mainly devoted to the problems of truth. What is truth (*pramā*)? How do we come by it? In other words, what are the sources of true knowledge? To put it in terms of Indian thought, what are

the *pramānas*? What are the avenues to *pramā* as distinct from *bhrama* (error)? How is truth to be distinguished from error? What is the standard or criterion or test of truth? These are central problems of theory of knowledge. Epistemology may be defined as the systematic inquiry into the sources, nature and criterion of truth. Knowledge implies a threefold distinction of knower (*jnātā*), object known (*jneya*) and relation between the two (*jnāna*). Unless these three factors are clearly understood, the problems of knowledge cannot be solved. Thus epistemology is closely linked up with metaphysics and shades off into it, even as logic passes over into epistemology.

Philosophy, as a quest for truth, may, with advantage, start with (i) an investigation into the competence of the mind to get at truth, (ii) the ways of knowing and their respective strengths and weaknesses; and (iii) the criteria of truth. Indian thinkers have held that such an inquiry called *Pramāna Sāstra* is the first task of any Philosopher. As MaxMuller says in his "Six Systems of Philosophy" (p. xii), "Almost the first question which every one of the Hindu systems of Philosophy tries to settle is, 'How do we know?'. In thus giving 'NOETICS' the first place, the thinkers of the East seem to be again superior to most of the Philosophers of the West".

Among western thinkers, it was John Locke who stressed the importance of discussing such questions as the sources of knowledge, before launching upon the philosophic enquiry. After him, Kant paid special attention to the problems of knowledge. From their time onwards epistemology has come into its own as an indispensable preliminary to philosophic endeavour.

Thinking is an activity of the mind; it takes place in some mind or other and is therefore individual, and yet it is universal in its significance. Though subjective in origin, it is objective, revelatory of something in the outside world. About an object in front of me, if I make the judgment "This

is a banian tree", if my vision is not defective, it is a banian tree not only for me but also for all who have normal vision. It is not a description of my mental state at the moment, but of a certain object in the environment common to all persons. When I say "The Skylab orbits the earth", it does not mean that my *idea* of skylab is linked with the *idea* of orbiting the earth. The judgment does disclose the fact of the existence of an equipment called skylab and of its action of encircling the earth. This claim to objectivity or truth made by knowledge which is subjective in origin brings to prominence epistemological problems such as: How does the mind get at the world outside? When is the claim of knowledge to be true justified?

On the question of the competence of the mind to get at truth, scepticism, in its extreme form, and agnosticism agree in denying the very possibility of acquiring true knowledge. The attitude of full-fledged scepticism is expressed in the following words by Anatole France in his "*The Gardens of Epicurus*"... "it is plain that we can know nothing, that all things combine to deceive us, and that nature is only making a cruel sport of our ignorance and helplessness....." Scepticism, in its milder forms, serves the useful purpose of drawing attention to the dangers of passing judgments on insufficient evidence. The attitude they commend is that of waiting for all relevant evidence before arriving at a conclusion. Agnosticism, sponsored by T.H. Huxley and Herbert Spencer in the last century, maintains that ultimate realities are unknown and unknowable. The exponents of these theories, quite unaware of the self-contradiction involved, have participated with zest in the philosophical pursuit, thereby indicating that the consideration of these questions is inescapable.

What are the sources of knowledge?

It is readily seen that our knowledge of men and things comes largely through the senses, which are called, for that reason, the "gateways of knowledge". Perception is thus one way of knowing. Reasoning manipulates the information furnished by the senses and draws inferences, thereby consider-

ably augmenting our knowledge. Reasoning is, therefore, a second source of knowledge. What each one perceives and adds thereto by his own reasoning forms but a small fragment of one's total knowledge. Much of it has been gathered from the testimony of competent persons. Indian thinkers have called this variously as *āpta-vacana*, *śabda* or *āgama*. This is a third source of knowledge.

Sometimes a fourth, called Intuition, is posited. Reasoning with its powers of analysis, though useful in many ways, is said to be inadequate for grasping certain important aspects of things, such as their value. The analytical intellect cuts up things and describes their constituents, but often misses the essence. E.g., it is possible to analyse the rose into certain chemical substances and express it in a chemical formula. But the value and significance of the rose exceeds its chemical constitution, and it slips through our fingers in the process of analysis. Again, analytical reason describing the music emanating from an instrument as catgut, horse-hair and their vibrations is at best a caricature and misses the nature and value of music. As Bergson says, reason cuts up and destroys; it is intuition that takes us to the heart of things.

These avenues to knowledge have their respective spheres and strengths and weaknesses. They are not exclusive of one another, but are complementary. In our search for truth we use all the tools that are available. As Montague says, they constitute "a federation of methods". History of thought reveals that different philosophers have differed in the number of acceptable sources of knowledge and in the account of their scope and competence.

Empirical philosophers have stressed the importance of *experience* in the acquisition of knowledge. In its extreme form, empiricism maintains that all knowledge comes ultimately from the senses, and that it must be possible to trace any knowledge to its source in sense impressions. John Locke, the Father of empiricism, maintains that man comes into the world with an empty mind, and on this blank tablet experi-

ence, pouring in through the senses, leaves its impressions as on wax. Reflection sets to work on these impressions thus passively received and forms complex ideas and builds up the edifice of knowledge. A consistent following of the Lockean premises inevitably leads to scepticism; and this has been demonstrated by Hume. If the mind is a blank tablet, a clean slate at the start, it is bound for ever to be in ignorance. Growth in knowledge is a process from the vague and inchoate to the clear and distinct and not a passage from total ignorance to knowledge.

Rationalists emphasise the role of reason in knowledge. Here too, the extreme rationalist asserts that reason, independently of experience, gets all worthwhile knowledge of reality. Descartes, Spinoza and Leibnitz are the chief exponents of rationalism in modern times. Plato maintained that all knowledge is remembering what the mind already knew prior to its birth when it participated in the realm of ideas. On the rationalist hypothesis the quest for knowledge can have no meaning, for we do not seek what we already possess.

Kant tried to reconcile the claims of sense and reason in the pursuit of knowledge. In his *Critical Philosophy*, Kant maintained that the senses supplied the raw material as it were and reason shaped these chaotic impressions into meaningful knowledge by imposing its own forms at three levels—the level of sense, of understanding and of reason. While he successfully exposed the inadequacies of extreme empiricism and of extreme rationalism, Kant's own view lead to an impassable gulf between *phenomenon* and *noumenon*, the real as known and the real *per se*. Since man can know the real only as his mental apparatus has shaped it, he is for ever confined to the *phenomenon*; and he can never know the real (the noumenon) just as it is in itself.

The difficulty inherent in the Kantian position may be indicated with the aid of an illustration. Suppose a person since his birth is accustomed to perceiving the world only through green glasses and that never for once he takes the

green glasses off. To him all objects seem green. and he asserts that they are green. He has no way of knowing what the objects really are, since he has no opportunity of comparing the results of observation with the glasses on and observation without them.

Authoritarianism maintains that sense and reason, though adequate for grasping certain aspects of the world, cannot apprehend the deeper significance of the real. On the principle that spiritual things are spiritually discerned, it says that one has to look for the disclosures of the real in the verdict of those who have dived deep into ultimate reality. The mystics of all ages and countries have emphasised the importance of first-hand experiences of the stalwarts of the spirit. saints and sages.

Empiricism and rationalism, in their extreme forms, have long been given the go by. The mind is no longer looked upon as a passive recipient of ideas constructing knowledge with these sense impressions, much as a builder constructs a house by laying brick on brick. Nor is it any longer believed that reason, unaided by the senses, is capable of conjuring up knowledge, as a magician claims to get a mango twig with flower and fruit from an empty hat. By making systematic observations under controlled conditions and by improvising and using delicate instruments that extend the range and accuracy of our observations, modern science has made observation almost a limitless source of knowledge. Yet there is the big question: How much of the findings are faithful transcripts of the real and how much of it is distorted as a result of the purposes of the observer designing and controlling the observations and selecting some and ignoring other data? It ought not to be forgotten that at best experience only supplies the raw material, the clues, but the shaping and the interpretation of the data is by reason. Reason itself with its stress on analysis and consistency may let go elements of value and also erect highly consistent systems which may lack conformity with reality. While it is open to us to observe or not, once we decide to make observation we cannot but take

note of what is out there to be observed. There is an element of the "given" in all experience. Further, sense and reason require guidance from intuition which is not irrational, but is the fulfilment of reason in significant, direct experience.

II

WESTERN THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

The diverse theories of truth that have been formulated in western thought may be regarded as variant forms of the following doctrines-the Correspondence theory, the Coherence theory and the Pragmatic theory.

The Correspondence Theory

Realism believes in the existence of an external world independently of perceiving minds. Perception, it maintains, makes no difference to the world. This belief in an inner, subjective world of ideas and an outer, objective world of things brings to the forefront the question: How does the subject get at the object? The realist assumes as a postulate that the mind can know the real. But it apprehends objects and situations in the external world not directly, but through copies, images or representations it receives from the world outside. The mind of man is like the sensitive plate of the photographic camera or a portrait gallery where copies or images of objects are left. With the aid of these images the mind cognizes objects of the world. Knowledge is thus a copy or representation of the real. If it is a faithful copy or representation, if it corresponds to the original, it is true; else it is false. Thus, true ideas are those that copy the real or correspond to it faithfully. For example, the judgment 'Desdemona loves Cassio' is a mental complex containing three items, viz. (i) Desdemona; (ii) Cassio and (iii) a relation called love in the direction of Desdemona to Cassio. If in the real world outside there are three items corresponding to these, i.e., a woman named Desdemona, a man known as Cassio, and Desdemona actually has an affection called 'love' for Cassio, the judgment is true. One-to-one correspondence between the mental and the real, between the inner world of ideas and the outer world of objects is the test of truth. Stated in

a bald form, this is the Copy theory of truth or the Correspondence theory as it has come to be known.

This theory of truth is exceedingly simple and seems quite convincing. When thoughts and things, ideas and facts correspond they are true; lack of correspondence indicates falsity or error. What more could any one expect? The theory is simplicity itself. But a little reflection would convince us that the situation is not so simple as that. For one thing, if the mind is for ever shut within itself and knows the real only through its ideas; there is no means of ascertaining whether ideas correspond to things. Unless the two entities compared are known and set side by side, correspondence or lack of correspondence could not be ascertained. By hypothesis, the mind knows only the ideas and not their objective counterparts. So the test of correspondence cannot be applied. An analogy would serve to clarify the point. If I am shown a portrait and asked to judge whether it is a good likeness of a man whom I have never met before, I could only reply "I cannot answer, because I have not seen the man".

Moreover, the dualism of mind and matter with its belief in representative perception is bound to end up in subjectivism and scepticism. Again, if ideas are aroused by external objects, every idea must point to its counterpart in the world, and must therefore be true, and there could be no erroneous cognitions. Yet the existence of error is an undeniable fact. Thus the Realist is hard put to it for explaining error.

The Coherence Theory

The idealist maintains that mind or spirit is the only reality and the so-called physical world is, at bottom, mind or something dependent on a mind. Thinking does not copy or mirror objects but constructs the real in accordance with its own laws. The so-called things are projections of the mind. Thoughts and things are not two independent series. Since they always go together and since neither appears without the other, thoughts, it is argued, are things. If thoughts or ideas

are the only realities there is no question of comparing them with any extra-mental reality outside for ascertaining whether there is correspondence. The test of truth must necessarily be something internal, some quality or characteristic of thought itself; and that is *coherence* or *harmony*. Those ideas are true that are self-consistent and consistent with other ideas already accepted as true; else they are false. This does not mean that an idea is summarily to be rejected when it runs counter to what is known already. It sets one thinking and initiates further investigation, which may reveal that the new idea is true and our past beliefs require modification or rejection. The history of science furnishes numerous illustrations of new ideas supplanting the old. The Copernican theory and the theory of organic evolution are striking illustrations. The newer ideas are accepted because they are characterised by a larger measure of coherence. The greater the system with which an idea is in harmony, the greater is its truth-value. Strictly speaking, for the Idealist ultimate truth is an all-inclusive, self-consistent system. Since that is the ideal towards which the human mind strives, but seldom reaches, human truths are more or less coherent; and hence have greater or less measure of truth-value. Thus, the doctrine of Absolute Truth as a "single consistent whole" implies the existence of varying degrees of truth.

Consistency is certainly a characteristic of truth; truth must, among other things, be consistent and harmonious. But the converse need not necessarily be true. The harmonious and the consistent need not be true. A consistent body of ideas may be spun round untrue premises. Cases of consistent lying can be noticed among 'jail birds'. The test of consistency is formal and has to be supplemented by reference to reality, to the "given", to what cannot be reduced to the thinking mind. But the moment it is done, it goes beyond the idealistic premises.

The Pragmatic Theory

Pragmatism arose as a reaction against absolute idealism. It refuses to believe that there are eternal truths to be

discovered by reason. There is no Absolute Truth to which all others approximate. There are many truths and these are made by the mind of man in his encounter with the world of men and things. The ideas that man forms are like the hypotheses that scientists formulate; they are verified and proved on the basis of their consequences, on successful working. Utility, serviceability, fruitful consequence is the test of truth. The proof of the pudding, as the adage has it, lies in the eating. This theory that truth is what *works* is the counterpart of the moral theory that good deeds are those that lead to the greatest happiness. William James formulated this theory and John Dewey developed out of it a variant form known as Instrumentalism.

This theory has had a mixed reception. As it has a scientific ring about it and as absolute idealism became less and less popular, some have hailed it as a signal contribution to the solution of the problem of truth. But others have felt that behind its attractive scientific garb, it is merely a restatement of the old sophists' theory of the relativity of all knowledge. In fact, William James himself admits that pragmatism is a new name for old ways of thinking. Statements such as "Truth is what satisfies", "Truth is made" or "validated" are highly ambiguous. "Satisfaction of what?" is a legitimate question which Pragmatism has to answer. If it is merely the satisfaction of the whim of the thinker, it would justify many a 'comfortable illusion'. What satisfies one may not satisfy another. Thus it would lead to relativism. The play of one's wishes, hopes, cravings and prejudices may work insidiously and warp our beliefs. Surely, true beliefs must, among other things, work; but what works need not necessarily be true. Many a belief that had worked for long has been discarded in the light of fresh evidence. Hence one must look for accord with the core of the real rather than be satisfied with elusive 'satisfaction'.

This review of the leading theories of truth reveals that while each contains an element of value, none offers a wholly satisfactory solution to the problem.

By now, it would have become clear that since different systems of philosophy entertain divergent views regarding the triple division of knowledge into knower, known and relation between the two, their accounts of truth and error and of the test of truth necessarily vary. For example, the realist who believes that the external world exists independently of the thinking mind and that knowledge is an external relation, has perforce to consider Correspondence as the test of truth. The Idealist with his belief that all reality is at bottom mental, is obliged to look for the test of truth in knowledge itself, namely, its Coherence. The pragmatist with his anti-absolutism, anti-intellectualism, and voluntaristic outlook, what William James calls the 'will-to-believe'; finds in "Satisfactory Adjustment to environment, social and physical", the test of truth. Thus, at its higher reaches epistemology shades off into metaphysics.

III

INDIAN THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

It may be of some interest to consider some of the theories of truth and error formulated by Indian systems of thought. Beneath differences in language, symbol and idiom one could notice a measure of similarity in regard to the appreciation of the importance of the problem and in some of the solutions offered. How identical problems have been sought to be tackled by philosophers widely separated by time and place could be seen in perspective.

The Nyaya Theory of Knowledge

First the Nyaya Theory may be considered. The Nyaya system believes that the universe is composed of nine sorts of entities or substances (*dravyas*) having their respective properties (*gunas*), modes of action (*karma*), and relations. These substances are ultimate. Not all of them are material; for they include the five elements, i.e., earth, water, fire, air and akasa, and also time (*kala*), space (*dik*), self (*atman*) and mind (*manas*). Thus the system is not materialistic realism; it is qualitatively dualistic as it admits not only material entities, but also souls; and it is pluralistic, because it points to a multiplicity of reals or ultimate entities; and realistic because it believes that all knowledge points to an object in reality outside it and independent of it. The system admits that the external world exists on its own right and that whatever exists can be known. Not only that, even knowledge can be known. Thus knowledge reveals not only objects, but also itself. For example, we not only perceive the moon shining brightly, but we are also aware that we perceive the moon shining brightly. Through know-

ledge we comprehend the real and are aware that we comprehend it.

If knowledge invariably points to a real object beyond itself, all knowledge must be true; and there can be no falsity. But it is clear that sometimes erroneous cognitions do arise. How is error to be explained on the realistic hypothesis? The Nyaya answer is that although corresponding to all items in our knowledge, which is a mental complex, there are items in the objective world, we may sometimes relate the items differently in our mind; and this wrong synthesis would account for error. If there is a one-to-one correspondence between the mental complex of our knowledge and the objective reality, there is truth; else there is error. Eg., when a jaundiced person sees a white conch as yellow, conch and yellow colour are facts of the objective world; but there is no relation of yellow colour to the conch as it appears in knowledge. Hence it is an error. When a red rose is recognised as such, the two complexes – the mental and the objective – agree; and there is truth. When a person sees a shell and mistakes it for silver, his judgement ‘This is silver’ contains three elements – i) the object in the immediate environment pointed to as ‘this’, ii) silver and iii) the presence of silverness in the object referred to as ‘this’. Corresponding to these, in the outer world there is an object ‘this’ about which the judgement arises’ and iv) silver, but it is not in front of the person making the judgement, but elsewhere. The relation of “silverness” in ‘this’ is not present. Hence in the absence of complete correspondence, the judgement becomes false.

The thorough-going realist is anxious to show that even in error there is an objective basis; the non-existent cannot be known; but the existent may be interpreted wrongly. Hence the name *anyathakhyati* or *viparita-khyati* for this theory of error. It is the predicative element in the judgement that does not fit in with the subjective.

How is correspondence with reality ascertained? If the mind is for ever confined to its own ideas, i.e., if it cannot go

outside of knowledge, how is it possible at all to test whether there is correspondence between the inner world of ideas and the outer world of objective reality? If, for example, one is asked whether a certain photograph is a real likeness of the man whom he has never seen, he is bound to say "I can't tell; for I have never seen him". In the absence of a direct testing of correspondence, an indirect test is employed. The knowledge in question is put to practice; that is, it is made the basis of action, and if it leads to successful practical activity, it is deemed true; else it is discarded as false. Eg., to ascertain whether the silver seen is there or not, it might be given for making vessels; if the goldsmith rejects it, we learn we have been in error. Again, to test whether the water seen in the mirage is real or not, one has to find out if it will quench thirst. The test is pragmatic; but truth is not what works, but it is what corresponds to reality. Serviceability or workability is only a further consequence of its conformity to the real. In itself, truth is what fits in with the real world.

Advaitic Theory

Having considered the explanation of truth and error offered by the realistic school of Nyaya we may now take up the views of a few other representative schools of thought such as Advaita Vedanta, Yogācāra and Mādhyamika. Advaita Vedanta, the name by which Sankara school of Vedanta is commonly known, believes that the ultimately real is Brahman. It is pure consciousness (*cin-mātrā*), devoid of distinctions, (*nirviśeṣa*) of forms (*nirākāra*) and of qualities (*nirguṇa*); and it is not consciousness in the usual sense of the term, implying the distinction of 'knower' (subject) and 'known', but is subjectless (*nirāśraya*) objectless (*nirviśhya*) *jñāna*. If Brahman is the only reality, what about the world of men and things? The Advaitic answer is: the world is *mithyā* (empirical, phenomenal). How does the phenomenal reality arise? The unitary reality under the influence of *avidyā* (ignorance) is said to appear as the world. When freed from association with *avidyā*, man attains oneness with Brahman and that is *moksha*. The following is Advaita Philosophy in a nutshell:— *Brahma satya, jagan mithya,*

jiva Brahma aikya (Brahman alone is true; the world is *mīthyā*; the jiva is essentially one with Brahman).

To the two-fold order of reality – the ultimately real (i.e. Brahman) and the phenomenal (the *prapancha*) – the Advaitin adds a third, the reality of dreams and fantasy. They are respectively known as *pāramārthikā sattā*, *vyāvahārika sattā* and *prātibhāsika sattā*. Objects experienced in dreams are not false; they have a reality; but their reality is all too brief, being wholly limited to the duration of the dream. On waking, their unreality is exposed. Likewise, the *prapancha* is real only till the dawn of *Brahma-jnana*. Thereupon disillusionment comes and the *mīthyā*ta, phenomenality of the world, is realised. There is, however, one significant difference between dreams and waking experience. Unlike dream objects whose unreality is exposed with exceeding quickness, the world is not shown to be *mīthyā* for quite a long time. For all practical purposes it continues to be real; but, in theory, it is bound to disappear sooner or later. The truth of Brahman, however, can never be sublated, that is, contradicted. It abides for ever uncontradicted (*abhādita*).

It is necessary to remember that within the domain of empirical knowledge, which from the absolute point of view is vitiated by a fundamental error and is only knowledge under a sentence of death, distinction is made between truth and error. Eg., a rope is mistaken for a snake. The perceiver does believe that it is a snake till he sees it in its true nature as a rope. The subsequent judgment, 'This is not a snake, but a rope', makes him discard the former judgment. But the apprehension of the rope as a rope is not likewise subject to cancellation or sublation. From the foregoing it would follow that truth is what is uncontradicted. As already pointed out, in the strict sense of the term, there can be only one truth; and that is *Brahmajnana*, every other knowledge being liable to sublation.

As long as man is under the influence of *avidyā* he cannot know Brahman; and ultimate truth would be beyond his ken. When he comes to know Brahman, he is said to

become Brahman, and is no longer a *jīva*. So we are concerned in epistemology only with empirical knowledge, *apara vidya* (lower knowledge). But the distinction that is made between truth and error within the sphere of empirical knowledge has to be explained. The Advaitin does not say that true judgements point to objects corresponding to them in the outer world, while false judgments do not. In fact, he is at one with the realist in asserting that every judgement points to an object even as it originates in a subject. If false judgements too point to objects, how could they be characterised as erroneous? This is a difficulty that confronts all realists. When a person perceives the stump of a tree as a thief, if there is a thief out there, as alleged, the judgment would be true and not false; and if there be no thief, the cognition of "thief" would not have arisen. How does the Advaitin resolve this difficulty? He says all judgments, the false no less than the true, point to objective counterparts in the world. The difference does not lie in the presence of objects in the case of true judgments, and absence of objects in respect of erroneous cognitions. But the difference lies in the nature of the 'object'. Delusory cognitions point to objects characterised by two features – (i) they are 'special,' to the perceiver and not common to all; e.g., it is only the timid person that sees the thief; the bystanders do not, and (ii) they last only as long as the delusion lasts. E.g., the moment the error is realised, the thief vanishes. But objects corresponding to true perceptions were there before perception and continue to be even after perception is over.

If erroneous perceptions do point to objects, what is the ontological status of those objects? Taking the delusory cognition of "thief", what sort of reality is ascribed to the "thief"? It cannot be described as unreal; for the cognition has arisen; nor could it be real, because it is later sublated. If the thief were really there, the cognition could not be discarded as false. Thus it defies all attempts at describing the objective counterpart of delusory cognitions either as real or as unreal. It is *sadasat anirvachanīya* (indescribable as *sat* or *asat*). Hence the Advaita theory of error is known as

anirvachanīya khyāti. To say that it is indescribable is no explanation, but a candid admission that the problem is difficult of solution.

The Yogachara theory

The *Yogāchāra*, also called the *Vijnānavādin*, maintains that reality is just a stream of ideas, thoughts (*vijnāna*) perishing each moment and being replaced by others equally momentary, and these by yet others and so on perennially. The common belief that things existing in the outside world stimulate the senses and cause ideas is rejected. There are no things, but only thoughts. The so-called "things" are merely mental projections like pictures projected on the screen in cinematograph. The *Yogāchāra* seeks to buttress this rather untenable thesis with several arguments, the chief among them being the analogy of dreams. It is argued that just as in dreams perceptions arise without objects to correspond to them, in waking life also thoughts originate without their objective counterparts. 'Knower', 'known' and 'knowledge' are not, it is contended, distinct factors, but are artificial distinctions in what is truly one.

How does this extreme form of subjectivism explain error? The *Vijnānavādin* says that when one mistakes a shell for silver, what is but a mental modification is seen as if it were out there in the external world. In technical language it is called *ātma-khyāti*. The subsequent judgment, "This is not silver", sublates, refutes, negates the externality of silver, but not its reality or very being. The question arises: How does silver come to be perceived at all when there is only shell? The answer is silver is not perceived due to any corresponding object in the external world, but due to some *vāsana* (previous impressions). But this only pushes the inquiry further back. There is bound to be a question: How was the *vāsana* generated? It is not therefore a solution. Moreover, on the subjectivist hypothesis all cognitions are only ideas, thoughts projected and seen as things. With this general metaphysical background implying that even the so-called truths are only illusions, the *Yogāchāra*

seeks to distinguish truth from error. What the basis of this distinction is has not been clearly indicated. One looks in vain for a rational account of delusory perception and its subsequent sublation.

Mādhyamika theory

Mādhyamika Buddhism draws out all the implications of the twin doctrines of the Buddha, namely, the doctrine that things are momentary (*kṣaṇika*) and that substances are just aggregates or bundles or collocations of qualities (i.e., there is no so-called substance over and above the qualities and owning them). The real, it is said, cannot be described in any of the categories known to human thought; for no description is unassailable. That the real is *śūnya* (the void) is all that could be said. The conception of *śūnya* has not been clarified. Even among Buddhist thinkers there is acute difference of opinion as to whether it has any positive content or is only negative. But this is not germane to our discussion. The real defies all attempts at rational description; yet we do have a knowledge of men and things. Such knowledge as we have is said to be *samvrti satya*, empirical knowledge, relative truth as contrasted with absolute knowledge. This is akin to the *vyāvahārika satya* of the Advaitin.

How does the *Mādhyamika* explain error? Error, for him, is the cognition of the unreal (*asat*). Hence the name *asat-khyāti* for this theory of error. The delusory cognition has no basis in fact. In the stock example of shell-silver illusion, the silver perceived has no substrate, as is evident from the subsequent cognition, "This is not silver"; and there is sublation, the rejection of the former judgment. But how is non-existent silver perceived at all? There can be no perception without an objective basis therefor. In the subsequent judgment: "This is not silver" the negation cannot be a bare negation, but must imply something positive. That it is silver is denied only because it is perceived to be something else. This positive implication cannot be ignored as the *Mādhyamika* does. To say that the unreal is presented as if it were real is merely a statement of the problem and not its solution.

The Relevance of a Study of Epistemology to Education

A pertinent question to ask at this stage is: Why should the educator study Theory of Knowledge? The answer is not far to seek. The primary aim of the educator is to enable students to acquire knowledge and to impart to them the skills needed for getting at truth. They must not only know how we come by knowledge but also learn to test the credentials, the truth of knowledge acquired. What is learnt may be true, or may be a semblance of truth. Students have to be encouraged to test statements and theories. The two questions relating to the sources and the criterion of truth are closely inter-linked. It is not enough if the educator has a large fund of knowledge and is personally satisfied that what he is imparting is true. He must help the student to ascertain for himself whether what he has learnt is true or not. The tendency to take things on trust must be discouraged.

The problem of knowledge impinges on the educator's work at several points. As an instance, let us take lesson planning. If the educator thinks that the knowledge to be imparted is actually there set out in books and other sources ready to hand, he has only to select from that store-house a set curriculum complete in every detail, something like a readymade garment, fit for immediate use and pass on to students information and skills using time-worn pedagogic devices for effective communication. If, on the other hand, truth is not already known but has to be ascertained or discovered, the educator would assign some problems, the answers to which may not be known in advance but would have to be carefully searched for through planned procedures. Hence the curriculum is not fixed in advance, but unfolds itself in the course of teaching.

Again, on the theory that the test of truth is correspondence with reality or fact, it is assumed that truth is out 'there' to be found or discovered. The learning process should enable the student to lift the veil of ignorance hiding the truth from his view. The learner is said to have got at truth when his ideas conform to the real. He is exhorted to

make statements that square with facts and learn to distinguish fact from fancy. If the criterion of truth is not correspondence with fact but consistency or coherence of ideas, the student has to be trained to gather data that harmonize with his own observations on different occasions and also cohere with the findings of other observers. Both the correspondence and the coherence notions of truth agree in the belief that truth is eternal and objective, though the exponents of these two views offer different answers to the question: Is reality contacted directly or indirectly?

On the theory that the test of truth is utility and serviceability, ideas become tools for solving problems that confront us in practical life. Ideas are fashioned and offered as solutions. In themselves they are neither true nor false. Naturally, those that serve us are made true. What works is true. According to this view, the educator uses the project method, sets practical problems facing us in real life. They challenge the mind of students and induce them to dig up relevant data from the store-house of accumulated wisdom in books and elsewhere, form hypotheses, imaginatively deduce their consequences and verify whether they conform to facts. Cultivation of ability to solve problems that confront us in the severely competitive and combative world is the main objective. In the process, knowledge is acquired incidentally. What is sought is not intellectual brilliance, the ability to light up the dark regions of reality, but practical efficiency and capacity to make more and more effective adjustments to the world, and even shaping, rather re-shaping, the world. Intelligence must be trained to play its role as an efficient tool of adjustment. Its function is not merely cognitive, intellectual apprehension of the real, but also conative (volitional, practical), to subserve the purpose of action. From this it would follow that the role of the teacher is not so much that of imparting knowledge as inducing the learner to exert his innate capacities for knowing, learning or discovering. The resourceful teacher has to provide plenty of opportunities for getting first-hand experience in tackling real life situations. Learning is best done by doing, trying out various solutions.

One becomes a good musician by singing, not by listening to discourses on theory of music. The knowledge that comes alongside of practical efficiency furnishes material for further investigation. The process goes on endlessly seeking ever more satisfactory adjustments.

IDEALS OF EDUCATION IN ANCIENT INDIA

Education was regarded in ancient India as an accomplishment of cardinal importance for the good life. To emphasise its indispensability, it was stated that every person is born with a triad of obligations (*riṇa traya*), one of which being *rishi riṇa*, the debt to the ancient seers. Out of infinite compassion, they have handed down to posterity a rich cultural heritage and it ought to be repaid by every one imbibing that cultural treasure, assimilating it, augmenting it and transmitting it to succeeding generations. Without participating in the accumulated wisdom and experience of the race, one would have to learn over again, by one's own effort, all the lessons he needs and that is obviously impossible. Education is thus essential for sustenance and growth.

It is the imperative duty, the sacred obligation, of parents to arrange for the proper education of their children. "Blessed is the family and fortunate the child that has parents who are righteous and learned and who are interested in teaching their children". Uddalaka Aruni tells his son, Svetaketu, "Verily none in our family is unlearned (*an-anūchya*), and a brahmana by mere birth, *brahma-bandhu*". The practice of sending their children even at a tender age to distant places to the care of eminent teachers is indicative of the great concern parents had for the proper education of the young. Whoever failed in this primary duty is despicable indeed. An old text states, "Mother and father who fail to give their children education are enemies. They are disgraced in the society of the learned, even as a crow in the company of swans". (*mātā śatruḥ, pītā śatruḥ* ...). One of the functions of the state was to see that parents discharged

their duty and to punish them for default. It was the justifiable boast of Aswapti Kekaya that no one in his kingdom was unlearned (apaṇḍita). In view of the importance of the matter, the *Tait-up*, sikshāvalli, reiterates for the sake of effect the injunction that every one should engage in study and in sharing the gains of study (*svādhyāya* and *pravachana*) alongside of one's multifarious duties, individual, social, moral and religious.

Vidyā, true knowledge, is discrimination (*viveka*), wisdom. The truly educated man is a mine of wisdom, not a store-house of information, factual knowledge. His wisdom controls his thought and action, keeps both away from what is ignoble and unworthy and ensures that he treads the right path. Wisdom enables him to be discerning, to see the real import of things and not be carried away by appearances. It is a mighty armour against adversaries, an inner fortification that enemies cannot destroy, an impregnable defence. (*Tirukkural*, st. 429).

Education of the right sort not only helps a person to communicate his thoughts with clarity and persuasiveness, but also to grasp the essence of what one hears or reads, however complicated it may be, without complaining of their expression. He uses simple language so that any one may understand. (*Tirukkural*, st. 424). To him no land is alien; he feels at home anywhere; he befriends the world by fostering a spirit of equanimity. He is honoured wherever he goes, whatever country he may visit. He is unruffled; does not get elated at success or depressed at failure (*Tirukkural* st. 397). The man of learning is able to restrain his senses, develop calmness of mind (*yuktamanah*) and grows intellectually, so that he is capable of independent judgment, fit to decide for himself. Understanding how the world moves, he is able to shape his life accordingly (*Tirukkural*, st. 426). Being capable of foresight, he sees in advance what will befall and is thus forewarned and avoids grief (*Tirukkural*, st. 427). He fears what is truly to be feared and refrains from what is likely to lead to disaster (*Tirukkural*, st. 428). Thus he is neither fool-hardy taking needless risks, nor cowardly, shrinking from every passing wind.

In marked contrast, the ignorant man is like an alkaline soil, of no use to any one; all that could be said of him is that he exists. (*Tirukkural*, st. 406). Aristotle goes to the extent of stating that the ignorant differ from the learned as the living from the dead. The disparity between the unlettered and the profound scholar is comparable to that between beast and man. (*Tirukkural*, st. 410). The man who is physically large and has handsome appearance but lacks discernment and cannot understand the larger issues of life is no better than a painted doll. (*Tirukkural* st. 407). Arts and sciences are the two eyes, as it were, to any human being; and therefore, the man who has not cultivated either of these, may be said to have two cavities in the face, not eyes. (*Tirukkural*, st. 393). Education makes the mind penetrating, lofty and rich with knowledge. Discriminating knowledge (*viveka*) is the greatest of possessions; without it, all other possessions count for nothing. In consideration of these tremendous advantages of sound learning and the dangers of remaining ignorant, every one must be actively engaged in learning unto the end of his life. Sound learning is priceless treasure; but unlike other forms of wealth, it cannot be stolen by thieves, nor diminished by giving. On the contrary, it increases with sharing. Every teacher knows that his knowledge of any subject gains in depth, clarity and precision with every opportunity to teach it. Education is a bliss in itself. The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, IV.III.33 states that the bliss of the person who is learned in the vedas (*śrotriya*), who is free from crookedness and selfish desires (*akāma*) is the highest *ānanda*. In fact, education is a source of double joy, joy of participation in intellectual endeavour, and joy at seeing others benefitting by one's learning. *Vidyādana* (gift of knowledge) is reckoned the highest form of charity. Our very conception of the supreme Lord as blazing, resplendent *jñāna* (*param jyotis*) is significant.

Wisdom was more highly honoured than caste, social prestige, age or great wealth. The episode of the brilliant teacher, young Kavi, son of Angiras, is relevant in this context. Kavi used to address the students in his charge as *putra-*

kāś (little ones). Many of his disciples much senior to him in age felt insulted by this mode of address and complained; but the decision was in favour of Kavi, for the reason that persons devoid of sacred knowledge were indeed children, irrespective of their chronological age. Considering the tremendous advantages of learning and the dangers of ignorance every one must be engaged in learning to the last. Tiruvalluvar wonders why people abandon learning at all, at any time. (*Tirukkural*, st. 397).

Keenly aware of the supreme importance of education for individual, social and universal well-being, the ancient Hindus developed education as a unique social institution for which there are no parallels anywhere in the world. In devising and setting up an efficient machinery for the transmission of knowledge, skills, culture, mores, attitudes, cherished ideas and ideals, they planned wisely for renewal and growth of individuals and thereby of society also.

It may be useful to consider some of the salient features of education in ancient and mediaeval India, such as educational values and ideals, educational theory, the office and function of the teacher, the ideal pupil, his responsibilities, attitude to teacher, teacher-pupil relation, agencies of education, gains of education, levels of education, entrance tests initiation rite or *brahmacharya*, scheme of studies, punishment, educational procedures, forest universities, and education of women

Two levels of knowledge :

Knowledge worth the name, true *vidyā*, is knowledge of ultimate Reality, God (Brahman, the Supreme Purusha), the pure, spotless source of all beings. That alone is the highest wisdom (*parā-vidyā*); that alone liberates man from his bondage – *sā vidyā yā vimuktaye* (that is true knowledge which liberates man from bondage to the cycle of births and deaths). Every other knowledge is only auxiliary thereto. The vast edifice of sciences and humanities is assiduously built up only as leading eventually to the apprehension of the one Real.

in distress. Full of compassion his heart goes out to them. (13) Readiness to discountenance faults and to seek to correct them. (*skhālitye śāsitāram*). He will not wink at lapses, nor shirk his responsibility to enforce discipline, whoever may be the transgressor. (14) Ever engaged in working for the welfare of self and others. (*sva para hitaparam*). Working for common good is his rule of life, not an occasional exhibition of concern for fellowmen. As Aristotle says, "Excellence is not a good act, but a habit." The preceptor is ever in the habit of doing good.

The disciple who aspires for wisdom should strive to put himself under the guidance of an āchārya possessing such noble¹ traits. Obviously, it is most difficult to get such a person. He must be rare indeed; but it is part of wisdom to seek one in whom as many of these traits as possible are present to an appreciable extent. In any case, one who has no āchārya has no chance of knowing the ultimate truth, say the upanishads.

The ideal disciple :

Now for the traits of the ideal disciple :— The aspirant for supreme knowledge has a claim to initiation into the truth only if he possesses the following requirements.² (1) The first requisite is, of course, sparkling intelligence, the possession of a sharp intellect, a discriminating mind (*sad buddhih*). Without it all other qualifications count for nothing.³ (2) A keen interest in the company of the wise and the good and in serving them (*sādhu sevā*). (3) Strict adherence to moral precepts and scrupulous performance of one's allotted duties. (*samucita charitah*). Deportment, dress, manners, speech and the like should fit the condition of studentship. (4) Keen interest and a burning desire to know the real truth of things. (*tattvabodhābhilāshī*). (5)

1. Emerson in a letter to his daughter wrote : "It does not matter what subjects you study; it matters a great deal what your teachers are."

2. Venkatanatha's *Nyāsa-vimśati*, st. 3.

3. *Tirukkural*, st. 430

Taking delight in serving one's guru. (*śuśrūshuh*). (6) Shedding conceit, egoism and the like (*tyakta manah*). Even as water flows from a higher level to the lower, the benefits of learning would flow most naturally to a mind that is humble and free from pride. (7) Reverence for the preceptor. (*praṇipātana parah*)¹. (8) Anxiously waiting for the opportune moment to have one's doubts cleared. (*prasna kāla pratīkshah*) (9) Control over senses (*śāntah*). One with an ardent desire for knowledge cannot be interested in sense pleasures and run after them. (*vidyāturāṇam na sucir na pakvaṁ*). (10) Conquest over the mind (*dāntah*). The disciple directs his mind along right lines lest it should stray along devious paths. (11) Freedom from envy and jealousy (*anasūyah*). He looks for the good in others and is not out to discover faults in them. (12) Seeking refuge in the teacher (*śaranamupagatah*). Even as Arjuna confessed his helplessness and surrendered himself unto Lord Krishna and in all earnestness sought enlightenment about what was the best course for him to follow, the pupil has to place himself unreservedly at the feet of the master. (*Yat śreyas syān nischitam bruhitanme śishyas te ham sādhi mām tvām prapannam* - Gita II. 7. (13) Firm faith in the sacred books. (*śāstra viśvāsa śālī*). The disciple must desist from putting crooked interpretations on them. The Gītā teaching relevant in this context is: "Sāstras shall be your search-light in discriminating what may and what may not be done. He who neglects this guidance cometh to no good". (Gītā, XVI-24-Tasmāt Śāstram pramānam te kāryā kārya vyavasthitau). (14) Readiness to submit to, and the capacity to stand the test to which the preceptor may submit him. (*parīkshām prāptah*). (15) Gratitude to the preceptor for all his benefactions. (*kṛtakṛt*). The pupil looks upon himself as ever indebted to the master and feels no recompense adequate for the benefits received from him. Even the omniscient and omnipotent Lord, says Venkatanatha, knows not how to requite the āchārya who has dispelled all the darkness in the mind, by lighting therein the bright lamp of wisdom. For what has been received from the āchārya, it is but

1. tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevaya Gita, II, 34.

a little token to recount his praises with delight, in continual meditation on him and in spreading his growing renown.¹

A pupil who possesses these traits has a claim to be admitted to the privilege of discipleship and initiated into all the truths he desires to learn. The teacher feels he has an obligation to instruct such a student to the best of his ability.

The greatness of the preceptor :

The scriptures declare that the preceptor is to be revered as god. *Ācharya devo bhava* is a well-known upani-shadic injunction. The teacher partakes of the nature of divinity, has *devāmśa*, and is therefore entitled to great reverence. *Devamiva āchāryam upāsīta*. The following are some of the divine attributes of the preceptor.² (i) Like God, the āchārya dispels the dense darkness of ignorance. The greatest gift conferred on man by God is *jnāna*, wisdom. The Hindu conception is that the Lord appears in human form and gives the helping hand of the śāstras to lift up men immersed in ignorance, folly and sorrow. The Lord is *paramāchārya*, *parama guru*, the highest preceptor. Unlike the guru who waits for the disciple to seek his help, the paramaguru is more keenly aware than the disciple himself of his dire distress and goes out seeking him and *proffers* help and dispels his ignorance. In His avatāras such as Hamsa and Hayagrīva, He taught mankind the vedas. In His avatara as Rama, there was a glorious disclosure of *tattva* (truth). During Krishnavatara, the Lord gave the world the ever bright lamp of the *Gita* to illumine the mansion of the vedas.

(ii) The preceptor dispels not only present ignorance but also removes the very possibility of its future afflictions by laying the axe at its root cause, namely, sin.³ With the elimination of sin, its consequence, namely, *ajnāna*, stands abolished.

1. *Rahasyatrayasara*, Sishyakrtyādhikara

2. Venkatanatha's *Nyāsa-vimsati*, st. 2.

3. *Pāpam prajñānam naśyati*

(iii) Just as the Lord confers on the devotee the highest state, the state of similarity to Himself,¹ the preceptor makes the pupil wise and righteous like himself.

(iv) Even as God confers birthlessness, release from the shackles of *samsāra* (the recurring cycle of births and deaths), the *āchārya* has the distinction of causing the birth of true knowledge (*jnāna-janma*), an imperishable, undecaying state, a birth that puts an end to all births. When Alexander was asked why he revered his teacher, Aristotle, more than his father, he replied that while his father merely brought him into existence, Aristotle taught him how to attain eternal life, how to rise from earth to heaven.

(v) Through the preceptor's blessing, the pupil acquires the gift of extra-ordinary insight, marvellous power of grasping the inner significance of things that are but imperfectly known. From the *Gītā* it is learnt that the Lord conferred on the devotee, Arjuna, the divine eye (*divya chakshus*) to behold the most wonderful and sublime, all-embracing universal form (*viśvarūpā*) of the Lord. The concluding part of the *Śvetaśvatara* upanishad states that to him who has the highest devotion to God, to the *mahātmā* (high-souled man) whose devotion to his guru is equal only to his devotion to God, the highest truths of the *vedānta* shine forth.

(vi) God is the embodiment of compassion; likewise the *āchārya* is ever intent on doing what is conducive to the welfare of his pupils. Under his benign influence the pupil scrupulously avoids injuring others and is helpful to them.

(vii) The *āchārya* is a source of infinite delight to the pupil, just as the Lord is infinite, insatiable bliss, pure joy (*ānanda, rasa*) to the devotee. To be associated with the preceptor is itself immeasurable bliss.

(viii) Like the relation between God and man, the *guru-śishya* relation is natural and abiding and cannot be sundered.

1. The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman-like (*brahma-vid brahmaiva bhavati*), *mama sādharmaṃ āgataḥ* / *Gita*; *nirāṇāṇaḥ parama samyamupaiti*.

In view of these similarities, the pupil will be fully conscious that nothing that he does would be an adequate return for the benefits conferred on him by the guru and it is but natural that he reveres him like God.

Reverence for the teacher :

A high degree of reverence for the guru is to be cultivated by the pupil. "Honour the teacher as father and mother; bear no ill-will to him who pierces the ears with the needle of truth, without causing pain, but giving the boon of immortality through knowledge". This insistence on *guru-bhakti*, far from commending an attitude of servility, emphasises a spirit of reverence, esteem and regard which provides the necessary psychological setting most favourable for effective learning. When suggestibility is at its height, the youth coming under the personal influence of an accredited intellectual leader of high moral integrity finds his mind enriched, intellect sharpened and character chastened. The moral influence exerted upon the student by such a teacher gains added force because he charges no fee. The classic example of Ekalavya acquiring amazing skill in archery through one-pointed devotion to Drona is well-known. When the master is defamed, justly or unjustly, the pupil should shut his ears or depart rather than hear it. "The student must wait upon (*upāsita*) the guru for the sake of learning, should be attentive, should promote the guru's interest by all acts of body, mind and speech". In carrying out his master's instructions, Uddalaka, an ideal student, threw himself into the breach in the tank bund, finding other means unavailing. "The seeker of knowledge must stand before the learned", says Tiruvalluvar, "in fear and humility even as a suppliant stands before the rich man, eager and trembling".¹ Such is the learner's yearning for knowledge. The youth who is proud and cannot bring himself to humble seeking must be content to remain ignorant, condemned to an inferior position. This does not mean that the learner should slavishly and uncritically accept what he is taught. In fact, he is again and again

exhorted to reflect on it, turn it over and over again in his mind and accept it only if it appealed to his reason. After śravaṇa 'manana', chintana-reflection for intellectual conviction - was insisted upon. "True wisdom", says Sankara, "is not obtained by any means other than active investigation".¹

Intellectual training not to be divorced from character development.

The teacher's responsibility was to guide aright, not merely the intellectual development but also the moral culture of the young entrusted to his care. One should be educated to feel and act and not merely to think. Thinking alone does not make a man human and humane. Besides setting the pupil on the road to intellectual advance, to the acquisition of discernment, power of understanding and judgment, the teacher was also to instil in him worthy moral habits. Mere intellectual ability without refinement of character would lead to disastrous consequences. Many of the ills of present day education are traceable to the deplorable separation of intellectual from moral training. As a cure for this malaise, Dewey strongly insists that the school should be "conceived and constructed as a social institution having a social life and value within itself."² The school is not a knowledge-shop, but an institution where the young are guided to acquire patterns of behaviour that would be of lasting value to the individual and to society. Merely entertaining fine moral ideas would not suffice; often they are forgotten right at the time of action. They should be internalised and made to influence conduct in the desirable direction. As Talmud says, "Let not thy learning exceed thy deeds; mere knowledge is not the goal; but it is action".

The teacher's mission :

The ideal teacher, the very embodiment of learning and culture, dedicates his whole life for the pursuit and dissemi-

1. Na vidyate vina jñānam

2. Dewey : *Moral Principles in Education*, p. 15

nation of knowledge and skills and for guiding the character and conduct of his disciples. He is to teach truth exactly as he knows it, not keeping back any part of it from the pupil. (*Mund. up. I. ii. 13*) The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* states that the teacher is to reveal everything he knows to the pupil who has lived with him for a year. About the person who fails to resolve an honest doubt pretending that he does not know the answer, the *Praśna. up. (VI. 1)* says, "verily, he dries up even to the roots, who speaks untruth". Of the six sorts of persons whom the *Mahābhārata* regards as contemptible and deserving of being abandoned like a leaky boat on the sea, first comes the teacher who fails to teach. Appropriating knowledge to oneself and not sharing it with one's pupils implied that the teacher himself would lose hold over it.

The preceptor is to teach with heart and soul and should never be wearied of instructing (*Tait. up. VII-4-5*). He has a sense of mission and takes delight in leading the learner from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. (*Āp-I. 10.11*). Of course, the teacher is free to impart unto the pupil only what he is fit for and to withhold that for which he is unequal. It is a common experience that after exposure to the same instruction, pupils are found to vary in their attainments; some have quick grasp: like camphor which readily catches fire the instant it is in contact with fire, they need just a little stimulus from the teacher to kindle their mind. Some are slow learners; they require very great effort on the part of the teacher to make them comprehend what is taught. They are like charcoal which needs a good deal of fanning. There are yet others, dreadfully slow, and it is well nigh impossible to make them comprehend things; and they are like the banana stem which refuses to burn even after considerable effort. Hence the teacher takes note of individual differences in the students' abilities, interests and powers of grasp and plans the scheme of studies and instruction accordingly. The formula "education according to age, aptitude and ability" is not at all as new as it might seem.

Entrance tests :

Aspirants for brahma-vidyā were subjected to very rigorous tests, mental and moral, to assess their seriousness of purpose and intellectual competence, attitude and personality traits. The prospective pupil must be a person of intellectual ability (*medhāvi*) and of moral rectitude (*tapasvi*). The preceptor has the right to refuse to work with unsuitable material. The highest wisdom is not to be taught to the unworthy, even if the wealth of all the world is offered. The unfit, it is said, are meant for the loom or the plough. This practice of selecting candidates for initiation into the highest truths was world-wide. Heracleitus tells us "He who wants gold must dig for it; if he cannot take pains, he must be content with straw". "Cast not pearls before swine," is a necessary caution.

The upanishads are replete with examples of aspirants for the highest wisdom being subjected to exacting tests before admission to the privilege of discipleship. For instances Prajapati makes Indra and Virochana wait for a hundred years before agreeing to teach them; and even after that he gives the instruction only in instalments. Virochana is quite satisfied with the first lesson itself; but Indra comes again and again and is made to wait each time for a hundred years, till the instruction is complete. Yama tries to dissuade young Nachiketas from his quest by the offer of exceedingly tempting gifts; but he is not taken in by the bait. Resolute of purpose, Nachiketas declares, "No man can be made happy by wealth". Only then, Yama initiates him into the truth. Sanatkumara admits Nārada only after knowing that he has mastered all the arts and sciences and is very earnest in his quest. Pippalada tells Bharadvaja, Satyakāma, Gargya, Asvalayana, Vaidarbhi and Kātyāyana - keen seekers of Brahma-vidya - "Dwell with me a year more with austerity (*tapas*), chastity (*brahmacharya*) and faith (*śraddha*). Then ask what questions you will. If we know, we will tell you all". (Priana up. 1.2). It is needless to multiply instances. There was a strong belief that the guru who teaches the undeserving and the fickle-minded (*chāpala*) would lose his *nishta*.

Instances are known where the master has refused to admit those who, in his opinion, were not up to the mark. Satyakama Jabala, for example, refuses to instruct Kāmalāyana even after twelve years. Likewise, Svetaketu was not instructed into the nature of the Universal Controller (Adeśa), the truth of all truths, even after twelve years of guru-kulāvāsa. The goddess of Learning is represented as pleading before the Brahmana, "Protect me; I am thy treasure; guard me with care; do not expound me to the unworthy, the jealous (asūyaka), the crooked (anrta) and to those devoid of self-control (aijeta); but only to the pure in heart; then alone shall I be potent". The belief was that learning shuns the unworthy; only the pure (suchi), the self-controlled, the intelligent (medhāvī) and the true brahmacharin are qualified to receive it. Education that bears no relation to individual capacity, attainments and character is wasteful and fraught with disaster.

Education in the home : (pre-school education)

During infancy and early childhood the child receives education at home, where the mother and the father are the natural teachers. "That child is truly blessed with a mother (mātrmān) who has a mother affectionate and full of concern for his education". In the midst of her multifarious duties, the mother does not forget to instruct the child in many a valuable lesson. Through song and story, myth and parable, play and pastime, the child is taught many things. He is introduced to epic heroes and heroines, to moral notions about what is approved and what is not approved, to the substance of Itihāsas and Puranas, to many a scientific notion in a popular garb and to much else. An interest in literature and keen love of the first-rate in life are generated. The home is the best environment for the child to learn the first lessons in the art of co-operative living, of unselfish affection, of sympathy with fellow men, affection and regard for elders, in social virtues and self-sacrifice in the interest of other members of the family. At the next stage, comes the teacher. The Satapatha Brahmana says that every child has three educators – the mother, the father and the preceptor.

Grades of teachers :

The term *guru* signifies one who dispels the darkness of ignorance. He waits for the earnest seeker of knowledge to approach him for enlightenment and guides his intellectual and moral development – ‘*Acharya*’ conveys the double significance of one from whom the *sisya* gathers knowledge and learns rules of conduct and one who practises what he preaches. He teaches by precept and example, and is the best exemplar of virtuous conduct. He is the spiritual teacher of the highest rank. While neither the *guru* nor the *āchārya* charges any fee, the former is *vidyapadeshta* and the latter *brahmopadeshta*. He is *ati-guru*. The *upādhyāya* takes fees and imparts instruction in particular branches, some part of the *vedas* or any one of the *angas*. The *sikshaka* gives instruction in arts like music and dancing. The Hindu belief has been that the supreme Lord is the Parama Guru who, without waiting for the aspirants’ approach, appears in human form, seeking souls and saving them by revealing the supreme Truth.

In olden times, the practice of teaching for a stipulated fee was looked down upon. Kalidasa condemns it as selling knowledge like any merchandise (*jñāna panyam vanijam vadanti*). Of course, *dakshina* was generally offered, and was expected to be offered to the *guru*; but it was an honorarium paid on purely voluntary basis as a token of esteem and reverence. Rejecting all that king Jana Śruti offered, Raikva taught the princely pupil for no fee. Getting a good *sisya* was considered a reward in itself. Brahmā accepted Indra as a pupil without testing him, for the sole reason that he was getting such an illustrious pupil. The Kautsa - Varatantu episode in *Raghuvamśa* bears eloquent testimony to the ancient ideal of keeping education unsullied by the economic motive. On the completion of his studies at his master’s abode, Kautsa, an indigent lad, requested Varatantu, his *guru*, to mention his fee. The master said he did not want any fee and considered the getting of such a diligent student was itself a sufficient reward. But on the pupil’s repeated entreaties, the *guru* was provoked to say “four and ten crores for

the fourteen vidyas taught". Undeterred by the hugeness of the amount, Kautsa went to the palace of king Raghu, the patron of letters. On finding that he had gone to the forest, he sought him there only to find that he had gifted away all riches at the *viśvajit yāga*, keeping nothing for himself, Kautsa wanted to return without embarrassing the king with his request. But the king who managed to ascertain the object of his visit said that it was perfectly legitimate that he should offer the guru the specified dakshina and adding that so far no suppliant had sought him in vain, decided to wage war against Kubera to get the money needed. And lo there was an offer, from Kubera, of gold coins, far more than fourteen crores. The king asked the lad to take the entire lot; but the latter would take just fourteen crores and not one coin more. The king would not retain the balance for himself, as the gift was got only for the sake of Kautsa. The discussion testifies to the integrity of people in the past and their attitude to learning and to their sense of values.

Although no glittering prizes were offered or preferences assured for intellectual competence, it was enthusiastically sought as an end in itself. Pursuit of knowledge was considered a sacred duty, a joyous pursuit, not a task. The upanishads speak of the bliss of the *śrotrīa*, one well-versed in the scriptures, as unalloyed *ānanda*. Even now zest for learning for its own sake is not uncommon among the young; and if there is a tendency for it to fade, the responsibility for that catastrophe falls squarely on parents and teachers who make examinations rule the educational scene.

BRAHMACHARYA

Brahmacharya, the first of the four stages (*āśramas*) into which life was divided, was set apart exclusively for the acquisition of true knowledge and good character. 'Āśrama' signifying unwearied effort implies sustained effort all through life in every one of these stages of life—that of the *brahmachārīn* (disciple), *grahastha* (householder), *vānaprasta*

(anchorite) and *sannyāsin* (ascetic) – the individual has to lead a strenuous life of toil contending against temptations and selfishness and achieving mastery over them and attaining the goal. Every one, no matter to what caste he belonged, was to pass through the stage of the *brahmachārin*. Thus it was obligatory on the part of every parent to provide proper facilities for the education of his children; and it was the duty of every youngster to utilise to the fullest extent possible the opportunity thus afforded to him.

Great importance was attached to *brahmacharya*. The Rigveda speaks of it in glowing terms. By its power, the king is enabled to rule his kingdom efficiently; by it the gods themselves acquired immortality; by it Indra succeeded in getting his position as chief of the gods. It heightens spiritual power (tapovriddhi) and purity of thought and of body. By it the universe created by Prajapati is sustained and breath is put into the beings he creates; and it accounts for the acquisition of supreme knowledge.

Upanayana :

After a course of preliminary education in the home by the parents every boy¹ belonging to the first three *varnas*² – *brāhmaṇa*, *kshatriya* and *vaiśya* – is inducted into the stage of the *brahmachārin* (the disciplined life of a seeker of sacred lore). Weaned from the fond domestic influences, the boy is placed in the charge of a spiritual teacher (*āchārya*) to look after his further education. An impressive ceremony known as *upanayana* marks the entry on the stage of the disciplined student. With the performance of this purificatory ceremony (*samskāra*), the boy becomes a *dvija* (twice-born), is ushered into a new life of dedication to vedic study, to sacred lore and to service. Acquisition of knowledge and wisdom (*vidyā-grahana*) and observance of vows (*vratas*) – the sharpening of the intellect and the formation of an irreproachable character – are the two – fold aims of the *brahmacharin*.

1. The Rigveda and the Atharva Veda refer to the eligibility of girls also for *brahmacharya*.

2. The Yajurveda XXVI.2 enjoins the imparting of vedic knowledge to all.

The high seriousness and the quiet dignity and solemnity of the *upanayana* could be appreciated only when one understands the esoteric significance of the hymns chanted at the several rites comprising this elaborate samskāra and of the symbolic value of these rites. The symbolic significance of these rituals may be briefly indicated: Taking *samidh* (fuel) in hand, the youthful seeker of knowledge approaches the āchārya with the request that he may be pleased to accept him as a brahmachārin, a mode of approach sanctified by long usage. It symbolises his resolve to serve the master in ways such as gathering fuel for his 'sacrificial duties. The scriptures tell us that Surya (the Sun god), Saunaka and Satyakāma Jābāla approached their respective preceptors in this fashion. After ascertaining the name, the family background, the intellectual competence, thirst for knowledge and moral calibre of the seeker, the master accepts him, and places his right hand on the head of the disciple, as if to signify the imparting of his own spiritual lustre to the *sishya*.

Maunji - bandana - A girdle (mekhala) - a triple chord (made of *munjagrass* or bow string or wollen thread according as the boy is a brāhmaṇa or kshatriya or vaiśya) - is tied round the waist of the boy to secure for him the protection of the three vedas and success in his future calling. At this ritual, Sraddha, the goddess of faith, is invoked for guarding the lad against evil from every quarter.

Danda-dhāraṇa

The initiate is invested with a staff (*danda*) of palāśa or bilwa or nyagrodha, symbolising the desire for increased auditory acuteness, for retentive power and also for sweet speech. The following episode furnishes a clue to the connection of the staff with auditory acuteness, strong memory and proficiency in speech. Once the devas assembled under a palāśa tree and discussed the import of the vedas. When later they assembled there again to recommence their discussions having forgotten the proceedings of the earlier meet, the tree which had remarkable powers of hearing and known

for that reason as *suśravas* (good ears) recounted to them the earlier discussions in their entirety, and earned their gratitude and praise for its auditory powers and remarkable memory. At this ritual, the *brahmachārin* takes the vow of protecting the *vedas*. The mantra recited means: "As you protected the *vedic* treasures by hearing, I take the vow that I shall be thy protector." Again, since fine musical instruments like the *vina*, specially helpful in evolving exquisite melodies, are made of *palāśa* or similar wood, which *Vak* makes its abode, the wielding of *palāśa danda*, by sympathetic magic, is expected to invest the youth with sweet speech.

Aśmarohana is another ceremony. In this the initiate is made to stand on a stone, to signify invincibility, unshakable resolve to devote all his time to studies whatever may be the distractions and temptations.

The boy is then required to wear an upper garment made of the skin of a black antelope in the *upavita* mode (i.e. hung from the right shoulder, wound round the body and tucked under the right arm) as a device for accession of spiritual energy.

Another ceremony is the wearing of a new garment (*vāsa*) made of linen or cotton or wool to ensure for the boy a long life of strength, prosperity and splendour. The gods are entreated to encircle the boy like a garment and ensure for him long life, increased wealth and radiant success so that he may serve his fellow-men. A mantra chanted on this occasion means: "In the way in which *Brhaspati* put the mantle of immortality on *Indra*, thus I put this garment on thee for the sake of the good life up to old age, full of strength and splendour". *Medhājanana* is another ritual embodying a prayer for the development of mental powers.

The investiture of the sacred thread of three strands, *yajnopavita*, usually homespun – the insignia of the *brahmacharin* – is accompanied by a comprehensive prayer for long life, prosperity, health, strength, fame, spiritual insight and splendour.

Samitā-dāna, the worship of Agni by the offering of *samidh*, is an invocation to the gods to crown the educational efforts of the lad with tremendous success, even as the offering of *samidh* unto Fire makes it glow all the more brightly. The boy is accepted as a disciple, and the Savitri-mantra is taught to him. The āchārya places his right hand on the student's chest near the region of the heart and says "May I be dear to thy inviolate heart. I take thy heart under my will. Thy mind shall follow mine. Thou shalt rejoice with all thy heart in my word. May Brahaspati, the god of learning, join thee to me. To me alone thou shalt adhere. In me thy thoughts shall dwell. Thy veneration shall be bent on me. When I speak thou shalt be silent. May I be dear to thee. Let us dwell here in breath and life." After a prayer for concord, the teacher prays that he may 'become rich in holy lustre' through his pupils.

Upanayana, meaning literally 'bringing near' signifies the pupil being brought near the teacher for confidential instruction, for imparting great truths in utmost secrecy, 'not to be heard by six ears' (i.e. not meant to be heard by any one except the master and the disciple). The upanayana samskāra over, the learner is left in the care of an acharya of accredited scholarship and of upright conduct, whose mission in life is to teach and train, thereby ensuring cultural continuity and growth. The initiate becomes an antevāsin, an *acharya-kula-vasin*, an inmate in the home or hermitage of the acharya, virtually a member of the preceptor's house. Along with other students, he finds a home away from home and starts the lessons of simple living and high thinking. With the commencement of brahmacharya, the dedicated life of an earnest seeker of knowledge, an inviolable spiritual bond is forged between the *guru* and the *sishta*.

In a natural sylvan setting, free from temptations of any kind, the pupil makes rapid progress in his educational journey under the personal guidance of a selected teacher, the spiritual father, whose interest in and affection for the youngster are as deep as those of the father. The day's

work begins with a prayer which the teacher and the pupil chant together betokening the sincerity and solemnity with which they are engaged in the common quest.

saha nā vavatu
 saha nau bhunaktu
 saha vīryam kara vāvahai
 tejasvinā vadhīta mastu
 mā vidvishāvahai

“May the Almighty Lord protect us both (teacher and pupil); may He provide us sustenance; may He grant us strength and vigour to apply ourselves assiduously to the acquisition of knowledge in harmony and co-operation; may there be no hatred and jealousy, no dissensions among us following the same path.”

Disciplined life and study :

The pupil is trained to keep the body clean and healthy (saucha) and to take special care of the teeth and eyes. He is taught rules of conduct (āchāram). Smṛti texts set forth the rules that govern practically every aspect of the learner's life-time of rising and of retiring to bed, dress and deportment, food, hours of study and of recreation, attitude to teacher, to fellow students, to women, to strangers, animals and so on. The discipline to which he is subjected becomes progressively rigorous, and the course of study increasingly difficult. Rising early in the morning, he goes through a round of duties. He is not to sleep during day. His dress should be simple, and he is not allowed any ornaments. All students, even those coming from opulent homes, have to beg for alms and eat only after *nivedana* to the guru. The idea is that every one, irrespective of one's status, must learn humility. He is allowed two meals a day, and no eating between meals. Over-eating or eating unwholesome food is to be avoided. Meat-eating is prohibited. Sitting when his master is standing, or behaving in any irreverent manner is not countenanced. Practising music or participating in dancing is not desirable.

Gambling, back-biting, idle talk, scandal-mongering and lying are to be eschewed. He is to practise continence and shall not gaze at or talk to women when there is a chance of breach of chastity. He is to take the vow of truth-speaking. Lust, anger and greed, which have been characterised as gates of Hell, are to be scrupulously avoided. In short, the brahmacharin should keep his tongue, arms and speech under strict control. He is wedded to a life of poverty, continence and service. As it has been said, it is not a question of what the brahmacharin can have, but what he can do without. He has to lead a life of simplicity, limiting his wants and to be satisfied with what is absolutely indispensable.

A noteworthy feature is that all pupils, rich or poor, prince or pauper, had the same status and faced the same rigorous discipline without any distinction. In the ashrama of sage Vasishta, Sri Rama and his Brother had no preferential treatment. Sri Krishna and Balarama lived on equal footing with poor Sudhama (Kuchela, the man in rags) in Sandipini's hermitage at Avanti.

The 'dos' and 'don'ts' which the learner had to observe may seem at first sight to make his life unduly severe, that they made for a maimed life or a life of privation. A closer look would, however, convince one that those regulations were intended to foster a healthy, well-organised life, redirecting, sublimating the raw instincts and dispositions so as to subserve the purposes of a noble life. Our ancients knew that instinctive drives and urges could not be disposed of by fulfilment, gratification, any more than fire could be extinguished by pouring clarified butter into it. That only makes it rage more fiercely. They were equally aware of the dangers of repression (*aseva*) about which the Freudians speak so much. Neither expression nor repression yields satisfying results. Every action issues from some *kāma* (desire); only it has to be wisely directed to proper ends. The best course left is to redirect it along healthy channels. Kept busy all the time with some useful, legitimate, exciting and interesting activity, the learner has really no chance to go astray.

Intellectual discernment and moral excellence cannot be acquired except through strenuous effort, combating temptations and leading a life of austerity (*yajna*). Acquisition of right education is indeed *jnāna-yajna*. Disciplined life creates a quality of mind favourable for sound knowledge and noble effort. Through rigorous training the learner steels his heart against temptations, controls his senses and mind, just as a competent horseman controls a strong and skittish horse. After all, as Kautilya says, control of senses is the main function of all education (*Kritsnam hi śāstram indriya nigrahaḥ*). Having controlled his senses and mind, he is able to react sharply against injustice, cruelty and other moral evils, the fragmentary, confused and contradictory ideas, even as a trained musician automatically reacts by a wry face at hearing music out of tune. The brahmacharin who has kept his vows sees things in the proper perspective, gets awareness of intellectual, moral and spiritual values and strives to achieve them.

The scheme of studies

The scheme of studies was not exclusively religious, theological or philosophical. The aim was not to turn all into ascetics, theologians or metaphysicians, but to provide for every sort of intellectual interest not forgetting, however, to emphasise an awareness of the nature of man, his place in the cosmos and his destiny. Almost every sphere of secular studies was also cultivated to enable the building up of the economic life of the people. The Mahabharata refers to several departments of the *āśramas*, such as Agnisthana (fire-worship), *Brahma-sthana* (vedic studies), Vishnusthāna (rajānīti, statecraft), *Mahendrasthana* (military science), *vaivāsvatha-sthāna* (astronomy), *Somasthana* (botany), *Kārtikeya sthana* (military organisation, planning operation, strategy), and so on. This indicates the wide range of subjects studied. The great achievements of our ancients in science and technology, arts and crafts, agriculture and industry, trade and commerce and other fields would not have been possible but for the active pursuit of the sciences, pure and applied, along side of philosophical and literary studies. The great monu-

ments, temples, vihāras, forts, dormitories, observatories, dams, irrigation canals, devices for flood control and for impounding water for irrigation, and the like bespeak for the advance in science and technology. Indian bronzes, frescoes, mural paintings, wood-work, and the like are achievements of which any country could be proud. The quality of steel used in the Asokan Pillar, is still a matter for wonder. Dacca muslin, the finest fabric ever known, was eagerly sought all over the western world. Medical knowledge and surgical skill displayed by the medical practitioners of old were of a high order. Recent researches have revealed that for many a fell disease for which allopathy is yet to find an effective cure, Ayurveda and allied Indian systems had already discovered potent remedies. There are accounts given of surgical instruments then in use. Detailed instructions for the construction of aeroplanes are given in one of the Tamil classics. No aspect of life was considered to be beyond the pale of systematic study. Thoroughness of investigation, whatever be the field chosen, was commended. As the Lord says in the Gita : Yoga is efficiency in action (*Yogah karmasu kau-salam*). The spirit pervading all work, literary workmanship, scientific work, inventive endeavour and artistic creation, should be that of creating a fine human being. Diverse studies are to be pursued as so many avenues for understanding life and as subserving its purposes.

Educational procedures

There is really no shortcut to learning. The royal road lies through careful, observant study. The greater the effort one takes to study, the greater is the measure of the reward; just as the deeper one digs in the river bed the greater is the gush of water. One who casually picks up ideas from books or discourses without learning them in the proper way and parades them as his own runs the risk of exposure even as one who goes about in stolen ornaments has to dread every passerby. (*Tirukkural*). Some of the notable features of the educational methods then in vogue deserve mention.

1. The first is the stress on memory. Efficiency in learning presupposes firm implantation of the learned material in mind, facilitating recall whenever wanted. Hence the prayer "May the Lord endow me with *medhā*; may I learn much and learn by the ear and may I retain what I have listened to." (Tait. up. I. 4.1). Sound memory being a highly valued trait, the ancient masters used to encourage pupils to memorise a lot of material likely to be of immense use in subsequent years. Many turned out to be walking encyclopaedias, capable of effortlessly recalling from memory any part of the extensive Vedas, Itihāsas, Dharma Sastras, lexicon and much besides. About moderns, we read with admiration accounts of boy-prodigies credited with extraordinary memory. For example, Macaulay as a boy felt confident that he could reproduce from memory all the books of Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, if by any mischance all copies of these classics were lost. But by the side of the youth, trained under the old Indian scheme, prodigies like Macaulay would pale into insignificance. To the modern mind, it might seem that memory was over taxed in the past. But in this, as in other aspects, the present tendency is to under-rate the mental powers of the young. If the impressionable years are allowed to slip by without memorising what is worthwhile, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to acquire it in later years. When the material is learnt, its full significance may not be grasped; but in calm reflection in later times, in chewing the cud, as it were, its many-sided import would unfold itself. To wait till mental maturity is reached and thinking power grows, on the doubtful analogy of collecting all material before construction begins, is unwise. Memorising is not an end in itself. Learning by heart is for constant pondering over the meaning. It could be done anytime one wants, if he had the material ready to hand. To minimise the load on memory, the *sūtra* mode of composition, aphoristic style of writing, was developed. Students who had the benefit of listening to discourses on difficult subjects, would find the relevant *sūtras* an aid to recall for later review. In view of the difficulty of access to books and references in those times, a good memory was a distinct asset. In any case, mere rote memory

or cramming as such, was never encouraged. Even in the case of *adhyayana vidhi* (the rule prescribing memorisation of the veda), it was clearly stated that mere cramming without knowing the meaning of the veda, had no value at all. (*arthajñānārthan adhyayana*). One who merely got by heart scriptural texts without being able to discuss their import was said to lose his brahmin-hood, mental power. A vedic text condemns blind, unthinking, mechanical repetition of material to fix it in mind, and compares it to the croaking of frogs at the approach of rain. One who merely repeats what is taught without understanding its sense is likened to a barren cow or a tree that has luxuriant growth, but bears no flower or fruit. He is a *sthanu*, a living pillar. He is no better than an ass that carries a load of sandal wood or camphor, without knowing the value of the merchandise it carries. Only the person who studies and understands the accurate meaning of the vedas is said to attain a life of bliss, abandoning sins through knowledge and right conduct. The crammer 'hears' but does not truly 'listen'; he sees, but does not really 'perceive'. Meaningful study and reflection (*chinta*) on what has been taught or studied are insisted upon.

2. In the field of science, inductive procedures involving careful observation, accurate recording, forming hypotheses and subjecting them to rigorous verification, were adopted; as would be evident from the accurate and thorough observation of the movements of stars and planets and from the vast amount of knowledge of anatomy, physiology, therapeutics and so on, gathered by our ancients.

3. In the domain of literature, diverse literary forms and rules of interpretation and principles of literary criticism that have stood the test of time have been evolved.

4. With the aid of parables, allegories, myths and symbols, the most perplexing and the most recondite philosophical problems were explained with surprising clarity. The upani-shadic seers adopted suitable devices to make the abstract seem concrete.

5. Vada or rational disputation or the dialectical method is the greatest gift to mankind made by our ancient masters. Dispassionate discussion employed solely for the purpose of exposing fallacies and sophistries and determining truth is a noble instrument. Lord Krishna declares in the *Bhagavad Gītā* "I am vāda of the disputants". Improper use of this noble instrument may cause feuds, breed dissensions and encourage bigotry. To prevent discussions degenerating into mere wordy warfare, where the unscrupulous disputant may stoop to extra-logical devices to earn applause rather than ascertain truth, strict rules of debates were evolved and laid down in no uncertain terms. Conducted in the proper way in strict conformity to the letter and the spirit of the rules prescribed, vāda helps to ascertain truth, to defend it from attacks of untruth even as a good fence protects growing crops from being eaten away by cattle. Deeper understanding arises out of controversy; hence the remarkable development of intellectual tournaments through the ages.

Through graded questions and answers the learner would be led to ascertain truth. Technical terms pertaining to vāda such as *praśnin* (questioner) *abhipraśnin* (cross questioner), *praśna vivāda* (answerer), *pravāchika* (expounder) and many others besides are met with in ancient books testifying to the prevalence of the dialectical method from very early times.

6. The highest knowledge is not something which the preceptor hands over ready-made to the disciple. No one can do the learning for another. "Not in me, not in me" sayeth the teacher, "but the kingdom of education is within you". Under the guidance of an inspiring teacher, the pupil educates himself and perceives the truth. 'Self-education' is the real method. Two outstanding instances could be cited – a) In the *Tait. up.*, there is an account of how Varuna instructs his son, Bhrigu, in the nature of Brahman. Only broad hints or suggestions are given and the disciple is encouraged to ponder over them and is enabled to get an intuitive perception of Brahman. b) Lord Krishna, as an ideal teacher,

makes Arjuna, the chosen disciple, see the truth clearly by the method of questioning and having doubts resolved. In the end, Arjuna acknowledges that he has understood things clearly and in the proper perspective and would act as directed by the Lord. An old saying sums up the position clearly. Only a fourth of one's knowledge comes from the teacher; a fourth is obtained from study of books; a fourth is acquired from discussion, clash of minds; and the remaining fourth comes from one's own experience of life.

The problem of punishment :

The views of the Smṛti-kāras on the question of punishment are instructive. They commend the eschewal of punishment altogether from the educational scene. The idea of a teacher 'ruling with loud voice and a big stick' was repugnant to them. Sympathetic treatment of children would, according to them, obviate the need of punishment. "Created beings", says Manu, II. 159 "must be instructed in what concerns their welfare without causing them pain; sweet and gentle speech must be used by a teacher who desires to abide by his dharma." Lively and spirited youth grow up into great and able men by gentle but firm minds patiently fostering habits of self-control. In cases of breaches of discipline where some punishment is called for, a look of displeasure or a rebuke from the teacher may suffice to correct the offender. Corporal punishment will not succeed where these fail. In extreme cases, where corporal punishment seems inevitable, it must be administered with a slender rope or a thin bamboo stick and that too on the back and nowhere else. Indiscriminate use of the stick anywhere and to any extent would be barbarous and sometimes disastrous. This may seem a counsel of perfection; but it is based on keen insight into child nature. If correct reform is the aim, corporal punishment is self-defeating; because, for one thing, it produces in the mind of the youngster a sense of resentment, a grouse, a feeling that he is sinned against rather than sinning. It seldom leads to a realisation of the mistake and a desire to give it up. Again, every time the offence is repeated, the dosage of pain

1. c.f. Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* for a vivid description of the village School Master.

has to be increased, as in the case of drink of the alcohol addict. And a stage is reached when any further severity would cease to have any effect and might even produce a violent rebound, utter callousness or bravado. Self-confidence is broken and a feeling of desperation may follow. The boy who is cowed down by excessive punishment may become a bully when the iron hand of the teacher is absent. Moreover, thrashing or even mild rebuke or censure in public often leads to a sense of humiliation or dejection from which recovery may be difficult. Nothing hurts the buoyant youth more than being made to look small in the eyes of his peers.

The stick is no remedy. The smṛti texts say that in extreme cases, the teacher may complain about the student to the state. Like-wise, when the student feels he has been unjustly punished or punished out of all proportion to the offence, he could complain to the state about the teacher. The aim of punishment should be reform, not wreaking vengeance. This could be achieved best by human and humane treatment only ?

The key to disciplinary problems lies in the teacher. He should have infinite patience, self-control, concern for the personality of the child besides being an adept in human engineering, capable of invoking all the resources of pupils and making them willing and enthusiastic participants in the educational enterprise. He does not act as a damper on their liveliness and spirit; nor does he abdicate his control and allow them freedom to do what they please. Efficiency in teaching consists in instructing without causing pain.

Convocation address :

On the eve of his departure home, having formally completed his studies, the student has a mingled feeling of joy at the prospect of reunion with his parents from whom he had been separated so long and sorrow at having to part from his guru whom he has revered and loved and who, as his spiritual father, has brought him up with unstinted love and affectionate care. The parting scene is very touching. The preceptor, no less visibly moved, makes a valedictory speech, a

parting address embodying sound advice which would ring in the ears of the learner throughout the rest of his life. This exhortation is verily a convocation address, a model for all time and clime. "Speak the truth; fulfil your social obligations (dharma); neglect not the continued pursuit of knowledge; offer to your teacher the gift to his liking; break not the tradition of your ancestry.

"Swerve not from truth nor from social duties, nor from propriety (*kuśala*). Never neglect your material welfare; abandon not the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge; forget not your debt to the gods and to the spirits of your ancestors.

"See God in your mother; in your father, in your teacher and in your guest. Do blemishless acts, never other acts. Imitate us, your teachers, only in what is good in our conduct, and not in other aspects. (*Yāni asmākam sucharitāni tāni tvayopāsyāni no itarāni*). Offer seat and refreshment duly to every teacher more eminent than us.

"Make gifts in full sincerity, never insincerely; give according to your means, with modesty, in fear and with friendly feeling.

"Now, should there arise an occasion for any doubt as to a course of action or a line of conduct: follow the example of wise teachers (brahmanas) present who are unbiassed, competent, independent and gentle and who strive for righteousness. And with regard to those who are falsely accused of crime, follow the example of those wise teachers who are unbiassed, competent, independent and gentle and who strive for righteousness. "This is the direction (*ādeśa*); this is the advice (*upadeśa*); this is the import of the vedas. This is the divine commandment. This must be meditated upon. Verify, this must also be lived." (Tait. up. I. xi. 1 to 4). Hard indeed it is to conceive of a nobler, worthier and more purposeful and more sincere exhortation to one at the threshold of the married estate, one about to assume the responsibilities of a householder and a citizen.

Mark the words "Imitate us, your teachers, only in what is good in our conduct, and not in other aspects". Here is a typical example of the teacher's self-effacing modesty and humility, hard to find anywhere else.

Again, another brief exhortation – "Let there be no neglect of truth; no neglect of duty; no neglect of prudent management of worldly fortune (i.e., no neglect of acquisition of wealth). Let there be no neglect of study and teaching".

Satyānna pramaditavyam.....

The two main objectives of brahmacharya :

Before proceeding to the next asrama, the brahmacharin is expected not only to have fulfilled all the vows (*vratas*) laid down for the disciple but also to have satisfactorily completed the course of studies. Some people, however, fail to fulfil one or the other of these requirements and enter upon the stage of the householder without the teacher's permission. Such a person is condemned as *kaṭvārūḍha* (one who steps on the cot when he ought to sleep on the ground). Some may be more mindful of the comfortable lodging and good food and raiment provided by the teacher than of their studies; and in consequence make no appreciable progress in studies. Naturally, they become the butt of ridicule. Some students change teachers frequently and are dubbed *tirthakāka* 'fickle like a crow'.

At the formal completion of his life as a brahmacharin, the learner takes a ceremonial bath, becomes a *snātaka*, eligible for entry on the stage of the householder. *Samāvartana* is the name given to the ceremony of leaving the gurukula and getting back home.

Education a continuing process :

Education is an ever-continuing process and is not over, and done with when once the brahmacharya āśrama is left behind and the erstwhile brahmacharin becomes a householder. It is a life-long quest persisting through all the

āśramas. We hear of *ṇaishtika* brahmacharins who do not enter upon matrimony but stay all through life wedded to the quest for truth. Even those who become householders go now and then to the guru for short periods to extend their knowledge and to have their doubts resolved. The *Taittiriya* upanishad, sikshāvalli, 9, enjoins on every one the supreme duty of studying and of sharing the gains of study, along side of manifold obligations, individual and social, such as following the path of righteousness, of truth-speaking, restraining the senses, controlling the mind, tending the house-hold fire and making offerings to Agni, being hospitable to guests and visitors, raising a family, protecting offspring and safeguarding the interests of progeny and so on. Here is a two-fold idea – i) that throughout one's life, not only when one is officially a student, one must continue to pursue one's intellectual interests, ii) one of the conditions of a student is to share his learning with others. Every one must be able to draw on the bank of ideas.

Universities in ancient and mediaeval India :

In essence, a university is a community of resident teachers and students actively engaged in intellectual pursuits, in the promotion and diffusion of knowledge. Universities spring up as a natural phenomenon out of the desire of men to learn and to teach. Scholars of renown imbued with a zeal for acquiring further knowledge and for sharing their knowledge and experience settled on the outskirts or near forests in our country to carry on their quest for truth in tranquil surroundings. Students with an over-mastering passion for knowledge gathered round them from different parts of the country seeking light and leading. Thus arose the 'forest universities' in India in ancient and in medieval times. In these houses of learning the youth may learn from the elders and his peers, and the elder may have the intellectual stimulus of the young. We are reminded of the famous centres of learning like the one at Naimisharanya under Kulapati Saunaka, where the *Mahabharata* is reputed to have been compiled, and that at Kanva's ashrama on the banks of Nalinda. Among the other universities of repute mention may be made of those at

Banaras (Kasi), Takshasila (the modern Taxila), Nalanda, Ujjain, Valabhi, Vikramasila, Kanchipuram, Bahur, Jatavana (monastery near Pataliputra), Saranath, Kūchi, Kama-pura (in Assam), Uddandapura and Odra (Bihar and Orissa), Navadvipa, and Madhura (the seat of the Tamil Sangham). These were not so much centres of instruction as places of research for advanced students.

Kings and merchants made liberal endowments and presents to those temples of learning. Common people and even foresters did not lag behind in offering monetary and material aid to these institutions. The spontaneous and unstinted support which poured in was a measure of the great esteem that people had for scholarship and for scholars. The scholars had no problem of finding the necessities of life; they could devote all their time to their intellectual adventure. To the gifts from kings 'no strings' were attached. The state did not interfere with the work of these institutions; nor did it attempt to take a hand in administering them. The student was free to learn where and what he liked; and the teacher was free to teach whom and what he chose. As the scholars did not have to pay for their maintenance and for tuition, poverty was no bar to higher education. It is on record that an orphan from Magadha could receive training at one of these universities in medicine and acquire great proficiency in the art of healing and become court physician to king Bimbisara.

Useful information about these universities could be garnered from literary and historical sources as also from the first-hand reports of travellers like Huien T Sang and It sang from China and elsewhere. Students flocked to these temples of learning from all parts of India and from other countries of Asia and even Europe, attracted by the teachers far-famed for their scholarship.

They came from every quarter and for every kind of knowledge. "Learned men came to Nalanda in multitudes to settle their doubts." (Sankalia). It is said that Nalanda

(near Rajagrha) sanctified by the residence of Lord Buddha and Mahavira had at one time over 10000 residents of whom 1500 were teachers. The entrance requirements were high. Only 2 or 3 in every ten gained admission. The Chinese traveller It sing is reputed to have studied at Nalanda for three years and to have taken transcripts of over 400 Sanskrit manuscripts to his home country. Valabhi in Saurashtra was next only to Nalanda in reputation. Huien T sang states that there were over 6000 students in Valabhi about 7th century A D. Takshasila which was in ancient times a great centre of trade and commerce and which enjoyed even greater reputation as a seat of learning attracted students from all parts of India and from abroad. Yet individual attention was paid to students and instruction was on the *guru-sishya* pattern, since crowd education begets a crowd mentality. Want of adequate facilities in those days for travel did not stand in the way of academic mobility. Students went from university to university for mastering different disciplines. It is also known that Indian thinkers of great repute like Nagarjuna, Asanga, and Padmasambhava visited Tibet, China and other countries in eastern Asia and even Europe.

Bana's *Harsha charitra* contains a graphic account of one of these forest universities. Bana tells us how the king, even at a distance from the abode of learning, got down from his chariot and walked on foot unwilling to disturb the quiet and out of profound regard and reverence for the learned gathering of students and teachers. They were drawn from different parts and were living practically an open air life. Some students were sitting on rocks, some in the shade of trees, some near bowers or running brooks. They professed different faiths; some were votaries of Vishnu, some of Siva; some were Jains and some Buddhists. There were also atheists and free - thinkers. The masters were experts in several fields like Mīmāṃsā, Vyakarana, Nyaya, Sankhya, Puranas, Pancharatra and so on. They were found expounding their theses, defending them from attacks, meeting objections or opposing rival views. Thus arguing, defending, controverting, they ultimately agreed or agreed to differ. No

curbs were set on the exciting adventure of thought. There was freedom to storm the citadel of truth. The way to truth lies through liberty. Beneath heated arguments and counter arguments, there was no acrimony, no hatred or ill-will. They pursued the policy of live and let live. The contentions of the inquiring intellects left no after-math of bitterness or rancour. The intellectual contests did not interfere with the friendship of the participants. All hatred was eschewed except that of shams and falsehood.

Hiuen Tsang pays just tribute to "the earnestness and diligence of teachers." "They instruct the inert and sharpen the dull." He refers to them as 'teachers of virtue', of 'spotless purity' respected by the king and the people. "Thus instructed by their teachers and instructing others, students passed 2 or 3 years in Nalanda, in Valabhi or other centres of learning. Students could take up any subject, but Theology and Religion were compulsory subjects of study. Many vidyas were taught and they included archery, medicine and surgery as well as Sankhya, Vedanta and the Mahāyāna system." (Itsang), 'Nalanda' meaning literally 'not giving enough', 'insatiable in giving' brings out one of the primary functions of a university, namely, that of creating an insatiable thirst for knowledge and not that of supplying bits or packets of knowledge or answers to specific questions. The universities keep alive the quest for truth. They were not mere agencies for transmitting ancient culture, but institutions for assimilating and extending knowledge. While continuity with the past is essential, their aim was also forward looking, training people to face the tasks of a new era. They storm the citadel of truth and conquer new realms. The epithet 'Nalanda brother' carried with it great prestige and ensured for the alumni of that university warm welcome in the society of the learned anywhere.

While different universities specialised in certain branches of study, all of them provided a large variety of courses for students to choose. The domain of knowledge was divided variously. According to one scheme, the entire field of the knowable falls into two divisions—sciences and humanities,

‘numbers’ and ‘letters’ as Tiruvalluvar calls them (*Tirukkural*, st. 392). A second mode cuts up the map of knowledge into fourteen (*vidyāsthāna*) disciplines, comprising four vedas, six angas and Mimamsa, Nyaya, Dharmasastra and Ithihasa-Purana, and sixty-four kalas (a variety of arts and crafts), chaurya (stealing) not excepted. Like Plato discussing whether the administrator should know the art of stealing, our thinkers seem to have considered it and decided that it was necessary to know that art and forget the same. They cite the case of the goldsmith who is alleged to appropriate valuable material like gold before the very eyes of the on-looker and called on that account *pasyatohara*. The Chāndogya up (VII. i) gives us a list of disciplines cultivated. Physics and Chemistry, science of life and of the elements (*bhūta-vīdya*), Ithihasa and Purana understood as history of personages in the past (*purāthana puruṣa vṛttānta*), Niti-śāstra (ethics), Rasi (higher mathematics) Nakshatra vidya (astronomy), Anatomy and Physiology, Cikitsa (medicine and therapeutics), Hetuvidya (logic), geometry, Varta (politics) Statistics, Public Administration, Law, Kshatra vidya (military science), Anuvyākhyāna (explanation of mantras) Vakovākya (science of disputation, dialectics), Silpasastra, Māna sastra, Deva jana vidya (perfumes, cosmetics etc), Kāma Śāstra, Alankara, Kavya, Gātha (music, song) Nāstika darsanas (heterodox schools of thought) and other areas were actively cultivated.

The cosmopolitan and universal character of these universities won great admiration. Despite difficulties of travel, scholars from different parts of India and from beyond its frontiers came in large numbers to these institutions for intellectual nourishment. “Scholars came from everywhere for every kind of knowledge. No sacrifice was considered too much, if it contributed to mental gain. Again, these houses of learning were not schools merely of Religion, Theology and Philosophy, but centres which made the entire range of the knowable their province. Their stock in trade was learning, scholarship and unless this commodity in universal demand measured up to the highest standards prized by intellectuals anywhere, it would fail to attract scholars

from abroad and would not have local demand either. In terms familiar to contemporary times, these universities were unofficial organs of an "international bank of ideas." Though functioning in different regions, they handled an international commodity. Their success depended entirely on the level of excellence aimed at and achieved. Moreover, the studies were broad based. The ideal, however, was not something of everything, but comprehensive scholarship along with specialisation in one or more fields. Acquiring an acquaintance with the total spectrum of knowledge, one gets a perspective, and, by well directed stages, one pushed up to the apex of the knowledge pyramid achieving unified, coherent, harmonious knowledge or enlightenment, an integral view.

The method employed was mostly tutorial, a mode of discussion. The dialectical method was largely in vogue. Only through personal contact with a mind aflame with thought can the pupil be inspired to think. Clash of mind with mind sharpens the intellect, and strengthens the hold over truth. Just as wood would not blaze unless put into fire, the mind does not grow to its fullest stature unless it has encounters with other minds. Ideas will only have subjective assent and lack objective validation unless proved by objective standards and established against external criticism. Through intellectual tournaments (contests) and not from mere acquaintance with books which ask no questions, furnish no answers and resolve no doubts, ideas are generated, tested and proved. Abdul Fazil draws attention to the value of the dialectical procedure when he says that while all nations set up schools for the young, the Hindus have seminaries.

Agencies for informal education :

Men of encyclopedic learning and upright, moral conduct, drawn from different parts of the country, meet at sacrifices; when their presence would be utilised for discourses on important themes. At these conferences and seminars people get a rare opportunity to listen to brilliant expositions.

During festivals and holy days when large concourse of people gather there would be lectures on religious, moral and literary topics. Katha kālaskhepam is a peculiar Indian device for exposition in popular form of the epics, puranas and other sacred lore. Periodically sadas, parishads and seminars would be arranged. Peripatetic teachers would be visiting different parts of the country disseminating knowledge. Listening to the counsel of the righteous is an important source of knowledge and is akin, says Tiruvalluvar, to leaning on a strong staff, for it would help those listening to it avoid a fall. (Tirukkural st. 415). If one has no time or facility to study, he could at least have the benefit of listening to the wise and of filing his mind with lofty thoughts so that it may stand him in good stead in adversity (Tirukkural, st. 414).

Education of women :

From time immemorial the education of women has been considered as important as that of men. This is in conformity with the ancient Indian tradition of honouring women and of recognising the intellectual, moral and spiritual equality of the sexes.¹ Despite the prevalence of contradictory attitudes to women during certain periods in the long and checkered history of our country, in the main, the education of women was not neglected, but encouraged. "An educated girl" says Kalidasa "is the pride of the family."² In vedic times, women no less than men enjoyed all facilities for complete education. The wife participated with the husband in all religious ceremonies. She chanted the mantras with the husband at sacrificial rites. She was *sahadharma chārini*, an equal partner in all his religious duties (*dharma*). In fact, no vedic rite could be performed without the wife. Knowledge of sacred duties was thus expected of women. They were free to cultivate any of the disciplines. The Rigveda refers to young maidens who complete their education as brahma-

1. Manu, "Women must be honoured and respected by fathers, mothers, brothers, husbands and brothers-in-law who desire their own good." "Where women are honoured the every gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, even sacred rites would not yield rewards."

2. Kalidasa : *Kumara Sambhavam* : Kanyeyam kulajivitam.

chārīnīs and join their husbands in whom they are merged like rivers in the ocean. The Brih. up (VI. 4. 17) refers to a rite where the father prays for the birth of a daughter who is a pandita.

The Atharva Veda likewise expects women to observe brahmacharya, acquire full knowledge of the vedas and their teachings and accept in marriage youthful persons of profound learning. Women studied the vedas and participated in philosophical discussions. Some of the hymns of the Rig-veda are attributed to women-sages. Visvavara, Gosha and Lopamudra are some of the reputed hymnographers. Maitryei and Gargi are well-known brahmavādins (philosophers). A few other names of philosophers and *mantra-drashti* (persons deeply versed in the esoteric significance of mantras) that adorn the pages of our cultural history are Haimavati, Kamasā, Apāla, Kadne, Paulomi and Savitri. Anasūya's knowledge of the Ithihasas was marvellous. Sumedha, Ishidāsi and Ampabal are outstanding names of women who composed Therigathas. Dhammādīna, the buddhist counterpart of Maitreyi, not caring for her husband's offer of riches, evinced great interest in, and mastery of, the doctrines of the Buddha. Sona and Kisa Gautami were eminent buddhist women who embraced a life of self-sacrifice and selfless service.

The Santi Parva of the *Mahabharata* refers to a lady named Sulabhā, 'gifted with yogic powers' discussing religious and philosophical problems. A courtesan named Pingala composed songs on abstruse philosophic themes such as life, death and knowledge. Every one knows about Draupati's attainments. She gives a long discourse to Yudhishtira and Bhima on certain problems of conduct and morality, the duties of the kshatriya and on statecraft.

While fine arts, such as dancing were considered the special field for women, they were free to pursue any branch of study including the art of war. The *Ramayana* tells us how Kaikeyi participated in battles along with Emperor

Dasaratha and, at a critical stage, saved his life by her skill in battle. Patanjali speaks of women being admitted for military training. There were women spear-bearers. Vātsyāyana refers to women whose minds were sharpened by a knowledge of the sastras. Classical Sanskrit literature contains references to great women writers such as Vijaya, Prabhudevi and Sita Pandita. Avantisundari, the wife of Rajasekhara, the author of *Karpuramanjari*, assisted him in his compositions and also wrote a book on poetics. Mandana Misra's wife acted as a judge in the historic discussions on philosophy between her husband and Sankaracharya.

The idea of higher education for women and of women students studying along with men were not foreign to this country. *Uttara Ramayana* speaks of Atreyi who studied along with Kusa and Lava and later proceeded to the Dandaka forest to learn vedanta at Agasthya ashrama. The Kaushitaki upanishad refers to a lady who, aspiring for renown as a great scholar and for obtaining the title of *Vāk Saraswati*, proceeded north for study. In *Malati Mādhava* there is reference to Kamandaki's male classmates as well as women classmates from different countries. Institutions are known to have existed where women studied along with men. Women's right to learn and to teach was not denied. There are references to women teachers (upadhyayīs) as well as women instructors in the scriptures (ācharyas).

This sketch of the ideals of education in Ancient India may be concluded with the statement that education was expected to foster *vinaya*. Vinaya is difficult to translate; it signifies a host of traits such as humility (humility born of rich accomplishments rather than of poverty), courtesy, eagerness to serve, magnanimity and the like. It stands for a disciplined mind that treats others with respect and consideration and is sustained by an inner hardihood that enables one to deal firmly with oneself and gently with others.

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